

GERHARD'S
SACRED MEDITATIONS





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GERHARD'S

SACRED MEDITATIONS.

Translated from the Latin

BY

REV. C. W. HEISLER, A. M.

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INTRODUCTION.

A NEW translation of the admirable devotional manual of John Gerhard needs no apology. The *Meditationes Sacræ* was first published in Latin in the year 1606, when the author was but twenty-two years old. It enjoys the singular distinction of being the only work written by a young man that gained and maintained a deep and lasting hold upon the Church, as so expressing the loftiest devotion, with spiritual insight so just, that all, even those old in the faith, might be guided and uplifted by the meditations of so young a disciple of Christ. It has been frequently reprinted in Latin; it was speedily translated into German, and later into most of the European languages, including the Greek. It has also been honored with an Arabic version. The English translation by R. Winterton (1631), passed through at least nineteen editions. It ranks in its fine devotional spirit with Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*, Arndt's *Das Wahres Christenthum*, and Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*. It is not a large book, but a golden one.

John Gerhard was born of a good family in Quedlinburg, 17th of October, 1582. In his fifteenth year, during a dangerous illness which continued about a year, he came under the personal influence of John Arndt, and resolved to study for the ministry. In 1599, he entered the University of Wittenberg. During his studies, he relinquished his purpose and gave himself for two years to the study of medicine. But, in 1603, he resumed his reading of theology at Jena. On the completion of his course, he began to give lectures at Jena in 1605. In 1606, the same year in which the *Meditationes Sacrae* appeared, he accepted the duke of Coburg's invitation to a professorship in the Coburg Gymnasium and to the superintendency of Heldburg.

In 1616, he became professor at the University of Jena, which position he retained until his death. Though still comparatively young, Gerhard had already come to be regarded as the greatest living theologian of Protestant Germany; in the numerous disputations which characterized that period, he was always protagonist, while on all public and domestic questions touching on religion or morals, his advice was eagerly sought on all hands and by every class. Almost every university in Germany called him, as well as the University of Upsala in Sweden, but in vain. His writings indicate enormous labor, being both voluminous and varied, dealing alike in exegetical, polemical, dogmatic

and practical theology. All exhibit patient study, great grasp of intellect, copious knowledge and religious experience. Luthardt says, as a theologian "he combined rare learning, great acuteness, wonderful industry, sound judgment and practical ability, with ardent piety."

His great work, the *Loci Theologici*, begun in 1610 and completed in 1621, in which the theology of the Lutheran Church is set forth, is his theological masterpiece, and is marked by fulness of learning, logical force, clearness, thorough elaboration of every question, and by a practical and spiritual use of dogma. "Bossuet is said to be the author of the often quoted remark that Gerhard is the third (Luther, Chemnitz, Gerhard) in that series of Lutheran theologians in which there is no fourth."

Gerhard died on the 20th of August, 1637. Of him it is recorded that personally he combined all the excellencies of the Christian character, his only failing, if it be a failing, being an excessive love of peace. The Meditations amply substantiate his fervent piety, his deep spiritual insight, which could only be acquired by living communion with the Lord.

The work of translation of this volume was entrusted to Rev. Charles W. Heisler, A. M., who has lovingly and faithfully performed his task, which to him was a congenial and pleasant labor.

The age in which we live is practical and energetic, more given to work than meditation. It needs the corrective which such books supply, teaching that there is a spiritual greatness which can only be attained by meditation and prayer. It is well to work, but the highest work can only come from the greatest souls who are nurtured by fellowship with God. It is therefore sent forth with the hope that its pages will furnish to many a help to higher and deeper fellowship with the Master, to their unspeakable comfort and larger efficiency as laborers with Him in His kingdom.

CHAS. S. ALBERT.

MEDITATION I.

TRUE CONFESSION OF SIN.

An Acknowledgment of a Fault Heals It.

O HOLY God (Lev. xi. 45), Thou just Judge (Ps. vii. 12), my sins are ever before Thine eyes, and present to Thy thought. Every hour do I think of death, for every hour death threatens me. Every day do I think of the judgment (2 Cor. v. 10), because for every day I must give an account at the Day of Judgment. I examine my life, and lo! it is altogether vain and wicked. Vain and unprofitable are many of my actions; vainer still are very many of my words; whilst full of vanity are the most of my thoughts. Nor is my life only vanity; it is also unholy and wicked; nothing good do I find in it. Even if I should find in it anything apparently good, yet it is not really good and perfect, because tainted with original sin and a corrupt nature. The godly Job said (Job ix. 28): "I am afraid of all my works;" and if so pious a saint thus complains, what must I, a miserable sinner, say of myself? "All our righteousnesses are as

filthy rags" (Is. lxiv. 6). If such be our righteousness, what then will be our unrighteousness? "When ye shall have done," said the Saviour (Luke xvii. 10), "all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants." If we are unprofitable when we obey, surely we shall be abominable when we transgress, His commands. If I owe Thee, O holy God, myself and all I can do, when I commit no sin, what can I possibly render Thee when I sin? Our righteousness, however excellent it seems to us, compared with Thine, is naught but unrighteousness. A lamp that gleams in the darkness is obscured in the light of the sun. Often a stick is supposed to be straight, until compared with a rule, its crookedness appears. Frequently the impression of a seal appears perfect to the ordinary beholder, whilst the eyes of the artificer will discover many defects. And thus often a deed that glows in the opinion of the doer, appears mean in the thought of the Judge; for the judgments of men are one thing, the judgments of God another. The remembrance of my many sins terrifies me; but oh! how many more escape my memory! "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps. xix. 12), O Lord. To heaven I dare not lift up my eyes (Luke viii. 13), because I have offended Him who dwelleth in the heavens. Nor can I find any refuge upon earth. For how

dare I hope for any favor from the creature, since I have offended the Lord of all creatures? My adversary, the devil, accuses me (Rev. xii. 10): "Thou righteous Judge," says he to God, "adjudge him mine on account of his sin, who would not be Thine through the offer of Thy grace; Thine he is by nature, mine by his wilful delight in sin; Thine he is through Thy passion, mine through my persuasion; disobedient to Thee, he has been obedient to me; from Thee he received the robe of immortality and innocence, from me he has received these tattered garments of unrighteousness; Thy robe he has lost, in mine he comes to Thee. Adjudge him then to be mine, and condemn him to share my eternal damnation."

All the elements rise in judgment against me. The heavens cry out, "I have comforted thee with light." The air exclaims, "I have given thee every variety of birds for thy pleasure." The water says, "I have given thee every kind of fish for thy sustenance." The earth declares, "I have supplied thee with bread and wine for thy nourishment. Yet hast thou abused all these things, and hast brought our common Creator into contempt; let all our blessings therefore be turned into instruments to torture thee!" The fire cries out, "Let him be burnt in me!" The water says, "Let him be drowned in me." The air calls out, "Let him be tossed and driven by my tempests." The earth

exclaims, "Let him be swallowed up by me." The fire again says, "Let my flames devour him."

The holy angels, whom God hath given to be my ministering spirits and my companions in the future life, accuse me also; and, alas! by my sins I have deprived myself of their holy ministry in this life and of the blessed hope of their fellowship in the life that is to come. The very voice of God, the divine law, is also my accuser: that law I must either keep, or perish; but for me to fulfill that law is plainly impossible, and the thought of perishing is absolutely intolerable. And God, the inflexible Judge, the almighty executor of His own external law, accuses me; Him I cannot deceive, for He is wisdom itself; from Him I cannot flee, for everywhere His power reigneth. Whither, then, shall I flee (Ps. cxxxix. 7)? To Thee, O blessed Christ, my only Redeemer and Saviour, do I fly for refuge. Great indeed are my sins; but greater far is the satisfaction Thou hast made for them; great is my unrighteousness, but greater far is Thy righteousness. I admit my sin, oh, do Thou graciously remit its penalty. I reveal it, do Thou mercifully conceal it. I penitently uncover it, do Thou graciously hide it. In me there is nothing but sin that deserves Thy condemnation; in Thee there is nothing but grace, that affords me a blessed hope of salvation. I have committed many sins for which I could be most justly condemned; but

Thou hast omitted nothing, that Thou mightest most graciously save me. I hear a voice in Canticles (ii. 14), which bids me, hide in the clefts of the rock. Thou art the immovable rock (1 Cor. x. 4), and Thy wounds its clefts; in them I will hide me against the accusations of the whole world. My sins cry aloud to heaven for vengeance; but still more strongly cries out Thy blood shed for my sins (Heb. xii. 24). My sins mightily accuse me before God; but Thy passion is mightier for my defense. My dreadfully wicked life clamors for my condemnation; but Thy holy and righteous life pleads more powerfully still for my salvation. I appeal from the throne of Thy justice to the throne of Thy mercy; nor do I desire to come before Thy judgment bar, unless Thy most holy merit interpose between me and Thy judgment.

MEDITATION II.

AN EXERCISE OF REPENTANCE FROM OUR LORD'S PASSION.

Behold the Suffering Christ!

BEHOLD, O faithful soul, the grief of thy Lord upon the cross, His gaping wounds as He hangs there, and the awful agony of His death. That head, before which the angelic spirits bow in reverential fear, is pierced with crowded thorns; that face, beautiful above the sons of men, is defiled by the spit of the ungodly; those eyes, more luminous than the sun, darken in death; those ears, accustomed to the praises of the angelic hosts, are greeted with the insults and taunts of sinners; that mouth, which spake as never man spake, and teaches the angels, is made to drink the vinegar and the gall; those feet, at whose footstool (*Is. lxvi. 1*) the profoundest adoration is paid, are pierced with nails; those hands, which have stretched out the heavens (*Is. xlv. 12*), are extended upon the cross and fastened with spikes; that body, the most sacred abode and the purest habitation of the Godhead, is

scourged and pierced with a spear ; nor did aught in it remain uninjured but His tongue, that He might pray for those who crucified Him (Luke xxiii. 34). He who rules in heaven with the Father is most shamefully abused upon the cross by sinners. God suffers ; God sheds His blood (Acts xx. 28). From the greatness of the price paid, judge of the greatness of thy peril ; and from the cost of the remedy, judge the dreadfulness of thy disease. Great indeed were thy wounds of sin, which could be healed only by the wounds of the living and life-giving flesh of the Son of God ; desperate indeed was that disease which could be cured only by the death of the Physician Himself.

Consider, O faithful soul, the blazing wrath of God. After the fall of our first parent, the eternal, only-begotten, and well-beloved Son of God Himself became our intercessor ; and yet God's wrath was not turned away from us. He, by whom God made the worlds (Heb. i. 2), was interceding for us, and for the sake of us miserable sinners, He, the Most High, became the Advocate of our salvation (1 John ii. 1) ; and yet for all this was God's wrath not turned away from us. The Saviour clothes Himself in our flesh, that the divine glory being communicated to our flesh, He might make an atonement for sinful flesh, and that the healing power of perfect righteousness being communicated to our flesh, He might thus purge out the poison of

sin inhering in our flesh ; and yet, despite all this, God's wrath was not turned away from us. He takes upon Himself our sins and their just deserts ; His precious body is bound, scourged, wounded, pierced, crucified, and laid in the sepulchre ; His blood starts forth profusely, like the dew, from all parts of His suffering body ; His most holy soul is saddened beyond measure, and became sorrowful even unto death (Matt. xxvi. 38) ; He is subjected to the very pains of hell, and the Eternal Son of God cries out in horror that He is forsaken of God (Matt. xxvii. 46). He sweats such great drops as of blood, and such anguish does He suffer as to need the comfort of an angel (Luke xxii. 43), who Himself comforts all angels. He dies, who is the giver of life to all. If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry (Luke xxiii. 31) ? If this be done to the Just and Holy One, what shall be done to sinners ? If God so punish our sins in the person of His Holy Son, how shall He punish them in us ? How shall God continually tolerate in a servant, that which He punished so severely in His own Son ? What shall those whom He condemns suffer, if His only Son, whom He so dearly loves, suffered so much ? If Christ, who came into the world without sin, could not depart from it without the bitter scourging, of how much sorer punishment shall they be deemed worthy, who are born in sin, who live in sin, and who die in sin ?

The servant rejoices, while for his sin the well-beloved Son is grievously afflicted. The servant treasures up against himself the wrath of the Lord, while the Son strenuously labors to soften and appease the Father's anger. O, the infinite wrath of God! O, His unutterable indignation! O, the inconceivable rigor of divine justice! If God visits His holy indignation upon His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, the partaker of His own divine nature, not because of any sin of His own, but because He had taken the miserable servant's place, what, think you, will He do to the servant, who so confidently persists in his sins and offenses? Let the servant fear and tremble and deeply sorrow at the thought of his own just deserts, since the blessed Son is so punished for no fault of His own; let the servant fear, who ceases not to sin, while the Son so agonizes for sin; let the creature fear, who has crucified his Creator; let the servant fear, who has slain his Lord; let the ungodly and the sinner be afraid, who has so afflicted the Holy and Righteous One. Let us hear our Saviour, O my beloved, crying aloud to us; let us give heed to Him as He sheds bitter tears for our sakes. From the cross He cries: "Behold, O sinful man, what I am suffering for thee; to thee I cry, because for thee I am dying. Behold the punishment inflicted upon Me! Behold the nails which pierce Me; there is no grief like unto My grief, and yet though My out-

ward sufferings are so great, far greater is the agony of My heart, because I am finding thee so ungrateful." Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, O Thou only God of mercy, and turn our stony hearts to Thee!

MEDITATION III.

THE BENEFITS OF TRUE REPENTANCE.

*"Repent: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand,"
says Christ.*

THE very foundation and principle of a holy life is godly sorrow for sin. For where there is true penitence there is forgiveness of sin; where there is forgiveness of sin there is the grace of God; where the grace of God is there is Christ; where Christ is there is Christ's merit; where Christ's merit is there is satisfaction for sin; where there is satisfaction there is justification; where there is justification there is a glad and quiet conscience; where there is peace of conscience there is the Holy Spirit; where the Holy Spirit is present there is the ever blessed Trinity; and where the Holy Trinity is there is life eternal. Therefore where there is true penitence there is life eternal. And hence where there is no true penitence there is neither forgiveness of sins, nor the grace of God, nor Christ, nor His merit, nor

satisfaction for sin, nor justification, nor peace of conscience, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the blessed Trinity, nor eternal life. Why therefore do we delay repentance? Why put it off until to-morrow? Neither to-morrow nor true repentance is in our own power. For we must render an account at the final judgment not only for to-morrow, but for to-day as well. That to-morrow shall come is not certain, but that everlasting destruction shall overtake the impenitent is certain. God has promised grace to the penitent soul, but He does not promise a to-morrow.

Christ's satisfaction is of no effect but in the heart of the truly contrite. Our iniquities separate between God and us, writes the prophet Isaiah (lix. 2); but through repentance we are again restored to His favor. Confess and bewail the guilt of thy sin; so shalt thou realize that God is reconciled to thee in Christ. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions" (Is. xliv. 22), says the Lord. Our sins were therefore recorded in the court of heaven. "Hide Thy face from my sins" (Ps. li. 9), prays the prophet. The Lord hath set our iniquities before Him (Ps. xc. 8). "Return unto us, O Lord" (Ps. xc. 13), was the prayer of Moses. Thus our sins separate us from God. "Our sins testify against us" (Is. lix. 12), complains the prophet Isaiah. They accuse us therefore at the bar of divine justice. "Cleanse me from my sin"

(Ps. li. 12), pleads David; and thus sin is revealed as a foul defilement in the sight of God. "Heal my soul, for I have sinned against Thee," again he prays. And thus sin is a disease of the soul. "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book" (Ex. xxxii. 33), saith the Lord. Therefore on account of our sins we shall be blotted out of the book of life. "Cast me not away from Thy presence" (Ps. li. 11), was the Psalmist's earnest prayer. Thus for our sins God casts us off. "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps. li. 11). Therefore by sin we drive the Holy Spirit of God from the temple of our hearts, just as bees are driven away by smoke, and doves by a foul odor. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Ps. li. 12). Therefore sin brings anguish of soul, and wastes the very powers of our hearts. "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws," exclaims the prophet Isaiah (xxiv. 5). Therefore sin is a sort of infectious poison. "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord" (Ps. cxxx. 1), says the Psalmist. Hence by our sins we are cast down even to hell. Formerly we "were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1), according to the Apostle. Therefore sin is spiritual death to the soul. Through mortal sin man loses God. God is the infinite and incomprehensible Good; to lose God is therefore an infinite and

inconceivable calamity. As God is the greatest Good, so sin is the greatest evil. Punishments and afflictions are not real evils, because much good may come out of them. On the other hand we should esteem them good because they come from God, the highest Good, from whom naught but good can come. Christ Himself, the highest Good, suffers such afflictions, and He could not be a partaker of what was really evil. They lead also to the highest Good, that is, eternal life. Through suffering Christ entered into His glory (Luke xxiv. 26); and through much tribulation must we Christians enter into eternal life (Acts xiv. 22). Sin is the greatest evil, because it draws us away from the highest Good; the nearer we approach God, the farther we get away from sin; the nearer we come to sin, the farther do we withdraw from God. How salutary then is true repentance, which releases us from sin and leads us back to God. Sin is so exceeding sinful, because of the greatness of God, whom we offend by our sin; and so great is He, that the heavens and the earth cannot contain Him. And on the other hand our repentance is so great because of the greatness of Him to whom through our repentance we return. The sinner's conscience, which he has defiled through sin, the Creator whom he has offended, the very fault by which he transgressed, the blessings which he has thus abused, and the devil at whose impulse it

was committed, all unite in accusations against him. How blessed is repentance which frees him from such an accusation!

Let us make haste, then, let us make haste to employ this sovereign remedy for our sinful malady. If thou shouldst repent even in the hour of death, thou wouldest not so much forsake thy sins, as thy sins would forsake thee. Thou wilt scarcely find one who has truly repented in the hour of death, except indeed the thief upon the cross. "Fourteen years have I served thee" (Gen. xxi. 41), said Jacob to Laban; "it is time now that I provide for mine own house," and thou—if thou hast been so careful for thy life in this world for so many years—is it not reasonable and proper that thou shouldst now begin to provide for thine immortal soul? Day by day our fleshly nature leads us into new sins; let the Holy Spirit then wash them away by our daily sorrow and repentance. Christ died that sin might die in us; and can we willingly let it live and reign in our hearts, since the Son of God Himself gave up His life to destroy its power in us?

Christ does not enter the heart of a man unless a John the Baptist first prepare the way for Him by repentance. God does not pour the oil of His mercy except into the vessel of a truly contrite heart. God first puts the soul to death, as it were, through contrition, that He may afterwards quicken

it through the consolation of the Holy Spirit (1 Sam. ii. 6). He casts it down to hell in godly sorrow for sin, that He may bring it up again by the blessed power of His grace. Elijah first heard the great and strong wind rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks, and after the wind an earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire; and at length the still small voice (1 Kings xix. 22); thus the terror of the law precedes the sweetness of divine love, and sorrow for sin the consolation of the Spirit. God does not bind up thy wounds, until thou acknowledge and deplore thy sin. God does not cover thine iniquities, until thou first uncover them in humble penitence; He forgives them not until thou hast confessed them; He does not justify thee until thou hast first condemned thyself; and He does not afford His rich consolations until thou hast first despaired of help in thyself. May God work true repentance in us through His Holy Spirit!

MEDITATION IV.

THE NAME OF JESUS.

What can be sweeter than the Name of Jesus!

O BLESSED Jesus, be Thou indeed a Jesus to me; for Thy holy name's sake have compassion upon me! My life condemns me, but the name of Jesus will save me. For Thy name's sake deal with me according to Thy name; and since Thou art a true and great Saviour, Thou wilt surely regard with mercy those who are real and great sinners. Have mercy upon me, O blessed Jesus, in the day of mercy, so as not to condemn me in the day of judgment. If Thou wilt receive me within the bosom of Thy compassion Thou wilt not on my account be the more straitened; if Thou wilt bestow upon me some crumbs of Thy goodness Thou wilt not, on that account, be the poorer. For me Thou art born (Is. ix. 6), for me Thou art circumcised, to me also Thou art Jesus. How sweet and delightful is the name of Jesus! For what is Jesus but Saviour? And what real harm can befall the saved? What beyond salvation can we either seek

or expect? Receive me, O Lord Jesus, into the number of Thy children, so that with them I may praise Thy holy and saving name. If through my sin I have lost my original innocence, have I deprived Thee of Thy mercy? If I have miserably destroyed and condemned myself, yet canst Thou not compassionately save me?

Do not so regard my sins, O Lord, as to forget Thine own mercy. Do not so weigh and measure my offences that they may out-weigh Thy merit. Do not so consider my evil as to overlook Thine own good. Remember not wrath against a culprit, but be mindful of Thy mercy towards a miserable sinner. Wilt not Thou, O Christ, who hast given me a desire for Thee, fulfill my longing desire? Wilt Thou, who hast shown me my unworthiness and just condemnation, conceal from me Thy merit and the promise of eternal life? Before a heavenly tribunal my cause must be tried, but it comforts me that in the heavenly court the name of Saviour has been given Thee; for that blessed name was brought from heaven by the angel (Luke ii. 21). O most merciful Jesus, to whom wilt Thou be a Jesus, if not to wretched sinners seeking grace and salvation?

Those who trust in their own righteousness and holiness seek salvation in themselves, but I, who find in me nothing worthy of eternal life, flee to Thee as my Saviour. Save me, for I am con-

demned; have mercy upon me, for I am a sinner; justify me, for I am unrighteous; acquit me, for I am under accusation of sin. Thou, O Lord, art the Truth (John xiv. 6); Thy name is holy and true; therefore let Thy name be true in respect to me; be Thou my Jesus and my Saviour! Be Thou my Jesus in the present life; be Thou my Jesus in death; be Thou my Jesus in the last judgment; be Thou my Jesus in eternal life. And assuredly Thou wilt be, O blessed Jesus; because as Thou art unchangeable in essence so wilt Thou be in mercy. Thy name will not be changed, O Lord Jesus, on account of one miserable sinner like me. Nay, but Thou wilt be a Saviour even to me, for Thou wilt not cast out any one that cometh unto Thee. Thou hast given me the desire to come to Thee, and surely Thou wilt receive me when I do come, for Thy words are truth and life (John vi. 63).

What if the propagation of original sin in me condemns me, yet Thou art my Jesus. What if my conception in sin condemns me, still Thou art my Jesus. What if my creation in sin and under the curse condemns me, nevertheless Thou art my Saviour. What if my corrupted birth condemns me, yet art Thou my Salvation. What if the sins of my youth condemn me, still art Thou my Jesus. What if the course of my whole life, defiled with most grieved sin, condemns me, yet Thou remainest still my Jesus! What if the penalty of death

to be inflicted upon me for my sins and various transgressions condemns me, yet art Thou still my Saviour! What if the awful sentence of the last judgment rise up against me, yet will I trust Thee, and fly to Thee as my Jesus, my Saviour!

I am sinful, reprobate, condemned; but in Thy holy name there is righteousness, election, salvation; but in Thy name was I baptized; in Thy name do I believe; in Thy name will I die; in Thy name will I rise again, and in Thy blessed name will I appear at the judgment. In Thy name every conceivable good is provided for my soul, and stored up in reserve as a sacred treasury. Alas! how much of this good have I lost by my own distrust; and blessed Jesus, I fervently pray that Thou wilt graciously remove this distrust far from me, so that I, whom Thou dost so mercifully desire to save by Thy precious merit and life-giving name, may not condemn myself through mine own fault and unbelief.

MEDITATION V.

AN EXERCISE OF FAITH FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST IN THE AGONY OF DEATH.

To me the Grace of Jesus is of Infinite Value.

BEHOLD, O Lord Jesus, how basely I have treated Thy passion; my heart is deeply pained and my soul greatly saddened, because I have no works or merits of my own to offer for my salvation; yet since Thy passion, O Jesus, may be my work, let Thy works also be my merit. Surely I do not rightly treat Thy passion, because, when that is amply sufficient for my salvation, I am seeking to supplement it by my own good works. And if I should discover any righteousness in myself, Thy righteousness would be of no avail to me, or certainly I should not so ardently desire it. If I seek to justify myself by the deeds of the law, I shall be condemned by the law. But I know that I am no longer under the law, but under grace (Rom. vi. 14). Shamefully have I lived; "O Holy Father, I have sinned against heaven, and am no more worthy to be called 'Thy son'" (Luke xv. 21); but refuse not

to call me Thy servant. Let not, I beseech Thee, the blessed benefits of Thy passion be denied me. Let not Thy precious blood become of no avail in freeing my soul from sin. Sin hath always dwelt in me; I beseech Thee, now, let it die with me. Hitherto the flesh hath had dominion over me, now let the Spirit triumph in me. Let the outward man perish, that the inward man may rise into new glory. Hitherto I have always followed the temptations of the devil; let him now, I pray Thee, be trampled under my feet (Rom. xvi. 20). Satan is at hand to accuse me, but he has nothing in me. The very idea of death terrifies me; and yet death will mark the end of my sins and the beginning of a perfectly holy life. Then at last shall I be able to please Thee perfectly, O my God; then at last shall I be established in goodness and virtue. Satan holds up my sins before me to terrify me; but let him accuse Him, who hath taken upon Him my infirmities, and whom the Lord hath smitten for my sins (Is. liii. 4). My debt is exceeding great, nor can I pay the least part of it; but I trust in the riches and kindness of my Surety; let Him free me, who hath become surety for me; let him pay it, who hath taken my debt upon Himself. I have sinned, O Lord, and my sins are many and great beyond measure; and yet may I never voluntarily commit that most heinous sin of charging Thee with a lie, when Thou dost declare by words

and by works and by an oath, that perfect satisfaction hath been rendered for mine iniquities. I fear not my sins, for Thou art my righteousness; I fear not my ignorance, for Thou art my wisdom (1 Cor. i. 30); I fear not death, for Thou art my life (John xiv. 6); I fear not my errors, for Thou art my truth; I fear not my corruption, for Thou art my resurrection (John xi. 25); I fear not the pains of death, for Thou art my joy; I fear not even the terrors of judgment, for Thou art my righteousness.

Let the dew of Thy divine grace and of Thy quickening consolation be instilled into my languishing soul. My spirit is drying up within me, yet soon it shall exult in Thee; my flesh droops and languishes, but shortly it shall spring up again into new life; the nature of my body is such that I must undergo corruption, but from corruption Thou shalt free me, as Thou hast delivered me from every other evil. Thou, O God, hast created me; and how can the work of Thy hands perish? Thou hast delivered me from all my enemies, how then could death alone prevail against me? Thy body, Thy blood, and all that Thou hadst, even Thine own self, Thou didst give for my salvation, and shall death then deprive me of that which was purchased with so costly a ransom? Thou art my righteousness, O Lord Jesus; my sins shall not prevail against Thee. Thou art the Resurrection and the Life, death shall

not prevail against Thee; Thou art God, Satan shall not prevail against Thee. Thou hast given me the earnest of Thy Spirit (1 Cor. i. 22); in this do I glory, in this do I triumph; and most firmly do I believe, doubting nothing, that I shall by and by be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7). Thou, O my dearest spouse, Thou art my wedding garment, which I put on in my baptism (Gal. iii. 27); Thou wilt cover all my nakedness; nor shall I attempt to sew on to this most precious and beautiful garment the vile tatters of mine own righteousness; for what is our righteousness in Thy sight but filthy rags (Is. lxiv. 6)? How could I dare then to patch the robe of Thy glorious righteousness with mine own abominable rags? In this robe will I appear before Thy judgment-seat, when Thou shalt judge the world in righteousness and equity (Acts xvii. 31). In this garment shall I appear before Thee in Thy heavenly kingdom; this robe shall so cover my confusion and shame that they will be remembered no more forever. Then shall I appear before Thy face glorious and holy, and this flesh of mine, this body of mine, shall be clothed in Thine effulgent glory, even a glory that shall continue forever and ever. Come, Lord Jesus, come; and let him that loveth Thee say, come (Rev. xxii. 20)!

MEDITATION VI.

CONSOLATION FOR THE PENITENT SOUL FROM THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

The Cross of Christ is our Crown.

(Written during a very severe illness, January 1, 1604.)

ALL the glory of the godly is in the shame of our Lord's passion. All their rest is in the wounds of our crucified Saviour. His death is our life; His exaltation is our glory. How great is Thy mercy, O heavenly Father, O Almighty God! By mine own power have I offended Thee; but by mine own power has it been impossible to please Thee! Thou, therefore, in Christ art reconciling me to Thyself. Behold, O holy God, the sacred mystery of Thy flesh, and remit the guilt of my flesh. Graciously regard what Thy blessed Son hath patiently suffered, and overlook what Thy sinful servant hath done. My flesh hath provoked Thee to anger; let the flesh of Thy Son, I pray Thee, incline Thee to mercy. My sins deserve the severest punishment at Thy hands, but far more hath the devotion of my Redeemer merited

Thy mercy. Great is my unrighteousness, but greater far is the righteousness of my Redeemer. As far as the mighty God is above puny man, so far is my wickedness beneath His goodness, in quality as well as in quantity. All that I am is Thine, because Thou hast created me; grant, O Lord, that it may be wholly Thine also by free and happy choice. Thou dost lead me to ask (Matt. vii. 7), grant that I may also receive! Thou dost give me the disposition to seek, grant that I may find. Thou dost teach me to knock, open unto me, I beseech Thee, when I do knock. From Thee cometh the desire, may the power to obtain come also from Thee. From Thee I have the power to will, grant me also the power to do (Phil. ii. 13).

Holy God, just Judge, if my sins are concealed (Ps. xxxii. 3), they are incurable; if seen, they are detestable; they grievously distress me; but more than all, they oppress me with a horrible fear. Withhold not, I beseech Thee, O God, Thy real and tender compassion, where Thou seest such real and awful misery! Where sin abounds, may grace much more abound. Holy Father, do not, I pray Thee, pour out upon me Thy wrath, since for my sins Thou hast smitten Thy blessed Son! Holy Jesus, deliver me, I beseech Thee, from divine wrath, for that Thou hast borne upon the cross for my sake! Holy Spirit, protect me, I implore Thee,

with Thy blessed consolation from the wrath of God, who in the gospel hath announced mercy to the penitent and contrite soul. O holy God, O righteous Judge, no whither can I flee from the face of Thy wrath. "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, behold Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." (Ps. cxxxix. 7-10.) To Christ, therefore, will I flee, and in His wounds will I hide me. O merciful God, behold the body of Thy Son so sorely wounded in every part, and regard not the wounds of my sins. Let the blood of Thy Son cleanse me from every sinful stain (1 John i. 7). Hear Thou His most earnest prayer, offered for the salvation of His chosen ones (John xvii. 9).

O holy God, Thou righteous Judge, my life terrifies me; for a diligent examination of it discloses only sin and unfruitfulness, and what fruit does appear therein is either so false, or imperfect, or in some way so corrupted, that it either cannot please Thee, or is absolutely displeasing to Thine eyes. Truly, my whole life is, on the one hand, sinful and worthy of Thy condemnation, and on the other unfruitful and wretched. But why do I distinguish between unfruitful and worthy of condemnation? For certainly if it is unfruitful it is to be condemned; for every tree that bringeth not forth

good fruit shall be cast into the fire (Matt. iii. 10). And not only shall that tree be burned which bears evil fruit, but that also which bears no fruit. When I think of those on Thy left hand in the judgment, I am sore afraid, since they are there not because they have done anything bad, but because they have done nothing good (Matt. xxv. 32): to the hungry they gave no food; to the thirsty, no drink.

O fruitless tree, thou art dry and useless, and fit only for the eternal flames. What answer wilt thou make in that dread day when, in the twinkling of an eye, thy whole life shall lie open before thee, and the righteous Judge shall sternly demand how thou hast spent it? Not a hair of thy head shall perish unnoticed, nor a moment of thy life pass unjudged! Oh, what a strait to be in! On the one hand will be thy sins accusing thee, on the other God's righteousness striking terror into thy soul! Beneath thee, the horrible pit of hell shall gape with wide-open mouth, and above thee shall sit the righteously angry Judge! Within thee, a burning conscience; without thee, a burning world! The righteous shall scarcely be saved; whither then shall a guilty sinner turn (1 Pet. iv. 18)? To hide will be impossible, and yet to appear before God intolerable. How then can I possibly be saved? With whom shall I take counsel? Who is He that is called the Wonderful, the Counsellor

(Is. ix. 6)? It is Jesus Himself, the very same who is my Judge, and in whose hands I am trembling with fear. Take courage then, O my soul, and despair not. Hope thou in Him whom thou dost fear; flee thou to Him for refuge, from whom thou hast fled in fear. O Jesus Christ, for Thy name's sake, deal with me according to Thy name. Mercifully regard me, a miserable sinner, as I call upon Thy name. If Thou shouldst admit me within the capacious bosom of Thy compassion, it will not be the more straitened on my account. True is it, O Lord, that my participation in sin merits condemnation, and my penitence can never satisfy Thee; but certain is it also that Thy mercy exceeds all my offense. In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust, let me not be confounded forever.

MEDITATION VII.

THE FRUIT OF OUR LORD'S PASSION.

The Passion of Christ is my hope.

WHENEVER I meditate upon the suffering of my Lord, I cannot but venture a great deal in respect to the love of God and His forbearance toward my sins. He bends His head to kiss me; He extends His arms to embrace me; He opens His hands to bestow gifts upon me; He opens His side that I may behold His heart glowing with love for me; He is lifted up from the earth that He may draw all men unto Himself (John xii. 32); His wounds are livid with grief, yet gleaming with love; and in those open wounds we must seek for the secret of His heart. Truly with Him is plenteous redemption (Ps. cxxx. 7); for not a drop only, but streams of blood flowed from five parts of His body. As a bunch of grapes, cast into a press, is crushed by the weight placed upon it, and on all sides pours forth its juice, so the flesh of Christ, crushed by the weight of divine wrath and the severity of our sins, pours out on all sides its precious life-blood. When

Abraham showed his willingness to offer his son in sacrifice, the Lord said to him, "Now truly I know that thou lovest Me" (Gen. xxii. 12). Acknowledge, also, the wonderful love of the Eternal Father, in that He was willing to deliver up to death His only-begotten Son for us (John iii. 16)! He loved us while we were yet enemies (Rom. v. 10), will He forget us now that we are reconciled by the death of His Son? Can He be unmindful of the precious blood of His own Son, when He numbers even the tears and the steps of His godly children (Ps. lvi. 8)? Can Christ possibly forget in His life, those for whom He was willing to suffer death? Can He, enthroned in glory, forget those for whom He bore such awful anguish upon earth?

Consider, O faithful soul, the manifold fruit of thy Lord's passion! Christ for us endured the bloody sweat, that the icy sweat of death's agony might not disturb us. He willingly wrestled with death, that we might not fail in the last trying hour, and endured the severest anguish and sorrow, that we might become partakers of the eternal joys of heaven. He suffered Himself to be betrayed by a kiss, the token of friendship and good-will, that He might forever destroy sin, by which Satan had betrayed our first parents under the guise of a tender friendship. He suffered Himself to be taken and bound by the Jews, in order to deliver us, who lay bound in the fetters of sin and under

eternal condemnation. He was willing that His passion should begin in the Garden, in making an atonement for sin, because in the garden of Paradise sin had had its beginning. He submitted to be strengthened by an angel, that He might make us the companions of the holy angels in heaven. He is deserted by His own disciples, so that He might unite us to Himself the more closely, who for our base defection had been cast off by God. He was accused by false witnesses before the Council, that we might not be accused by Satan at the last day, through that broken law of God. He was condemned on earth, that we might be acquitted in heaven. He, who did no sin, kept silence before sinners, that we might not be struck dumb for our sins, when brought before the judgment bar of God on account of our sins. He suffered Himself to be smitten on the cheek, to free us from the stings of conscience and the buffetings of Satan; and to be mocked and insulted, that we might set at naught the jibes and jeers of Satan. His face is covered, that He might remove from our faces the veil of sin, which hides God from our eyes, and leads us into culpable ignorance. He willingly submitted to be stripped of His garments, that He might restore to us the robe of innocence, lost through our transgressions. He was pierced with thorns, that He might heal our sin-pierced hearts. He bore the burden of the cross, so that

He might remove from us the awful burden of eternal punishment. He exclaimed that He was forsaken by God, that He might prepare for us an everlasting habitation with God. He thirsted upon the cross, that He might meritoriously earn for us the dews of divine grace, and prevent our dying of an eternal soul-thirst. He was willing to be scorched by the flames of divine wrath, that He might deliver us from the flames of hell. He was judged, that He might free us from God's judgment; condemned as a criminal, that we the real criminals might be acquitted; was smitten by impious hands, that He might deliver us from the devil's lash; cried out with bitter pain, to save us from eternal wailings; He shed tears upon the earth, that He might wipe away all tears from our eyes in heaven; He died, that we might live; He suffered the pains of hell, that we might never experience them; He was humbled before men, that He might heal our sinful pride; He wore the crown of thorns, that He might win for us a heavenly crown. He suffered for all, that He might offer salvation to all. His eyes were darkened in death, that we might live forever in the light of the heavenly glory; He heard the most bitter scoffs and taunts of wicked men, that we might hear the jubilant shouts of the angels in heaven.

Despair not, then, O faithful soul! Infinite Good

hast thou offended by thy sins, but an infinite price has been paid for thy salvation. Thou must be judged for thy sins; but the Son of God hath already been judged for the sins of the whole world, which He took upon Himself. Thy sins must be punished, but God has already punished them in the person of His own Son. Great are the wounds of thy sins, but precious is the balm of Christ's blood. Moses, in the law, pronounces a curse upon thee (Deut. xxvii. 26) because thou hast not observed all things written in the book of the law, to do them; but Christ was made a curse for thee when He hung upon the tree (Gal. iii. 13). The handwriting was written against thee in the heavenly court; but that has been erased by the blood of Christ (Col. ii. 14).

Thy passion, then, O holy and gracious Christ, is my last and only refuge!

MEDITATION VIII.

THE CERTAINTY OF OUR SALVATION.

A Good Hope cannot be Confounded.

WHY art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou still doubting the mercy of God? Remember thy Creator. Who hath created thee without any concurrence of thine own will? Who was He that formed thy body in secret, when thy substance was curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth (Ps. cxxxix. 15)? Will not He who cared for thee before thou hadst any being care for thee now, after He hath formed thee in His own image? I am a creature of God; to my Creator then do I betake myself. What if my nature is corrupted by the devil; and pierced and wounded by my sins, as by murderous robbers (Luke x. 30), yet my Creator still lives. He who could create me at first can now restore me. He who created me without sin, can now remove from me all the sin which has entered into me and has permeated my whole being, either through the temptation of the devil, through Adam's fault, or through my own actual transgres-

sion. My Creator can restore my soul, if only He is willing so to do; and certainly He is willing, for who can hate the work of his own hands? Are we not before Him as clay in the hands of the potter (Jer. xviii. 6)? But if He had hated me, certainly He would not have created me from nothing. He is the Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe (1 Tim. iv. 10). It is wonderful that He created me, and still more wonderful that He redeemed me. Never did our Lord give a clearer proof of His great love for us than in His bitter passion and bleeding wounds on Calvary in our behalf. Truly are we loved, since for us and our salvation the only begotten Son is sent from the bosom of the Father. And if Thou didst not desire to save me, O Lord Jesus, why didst Thou descend from heaven? But Thou didst descend to the earth and didst become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 8). To redeem a servant, God spared not His own Son (Rom. viii. 32). Truly hath God loved the world with an unspeakable love, since for its redemption He delivered up His own Son to be smitten, to be crucified, to be put to death.

Inexpressibly great was the price of our redemption (1 Peter i. 18); great and marvelous, then, is the mercy of God in our redemption. It would almost seem to one as if God loves His elect children as dearly as He loves His only-begotten Son; for what we obtain by purchase we certainly esteem

of greater value than that which we give in exchange for it. And that He might have adopted sons, God did not spare His own co-essential Son. What marvel then, that He should have prepared mansions (John xiv. 2) in His heavenly home for us, since He has given His own Son, in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead (Col. ii. 9). Certainly where the fulness of the Godhead is, there is likewise the fulness of eternal life and glory. And if in Christ He hath given the fulness of eternal life, how will He deny us a little particle of it? Truly God has greatly loved us, His adopted sons, since for us He gave His only-begotten Son. Truly the Son has greatly loved us, since for us He gave Himself. To make us rich, He took upon Himself the direst poverty; for He had not where to lay His head (Matt. viii. 20). That He might make us the sons of God, He became a man; and the work of redemption being finished, He does not now neglect us, but sitting at the right hand of the Divine Majesty, He there maketh intercession for us (Rom. viii. 34). What that is necessary to my salvation will He not accomplish for me, since He hath devoted Himself to the work of my eternal salvation? What will the Father deny the Son, who became obedient to Him unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 8)? What will the Father deny the Son, since He hath already accepted the ransom offered by the Son?

What if my sins accuse me; in this Intercessor do I trust; greater is He who is for me than my sins that are against me. What if my very weakness terrifies me; in His strength do I glory. What if Satan accuses me, if only this Mediator shall pardon me. What if the heavens and the earth accuse me, and mine iniquities declare my guilt; yet it is enough for me that the Creator of the heavens and of the earth and He who is righteousness itself pleads my cause for me. It suffices for me to acknowledge His merit, because mine will not suffice; and it is enough for me to have Him propitious to me, against whom alone I have sinned; whatever He shall not impute to me shall be as though it had never been. Nor does the fact that my sins are so grievous and so varied and so oft-repeated move me in this trust; for if I had not been burdened with sin, I should not so ardently desire His righteousness; if I were not sick, I would not call in the aid of the physician. He Himself is my Physician (Matt. ix. 12), He Himself is my Saviour (Matt. i. 21), He Himself is my Righteousness (1 Cor. i. 30); He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. ii. 13). I am spiritually sick, I am condemned, I am a sinner, I cannot deny myself. Have mercy upon me, O Thou my blessed Physician, my Saviour, my Righteousness. Amen!

MEDITATION IX.

LOVING GOD ALONE.

May Love Bind Thee Fast to the Lord.

ROUSE thyself, O faithful soul, and love thou Him who is the Highest Good, in whom is every good thing, and without whom there is nothing truly good. No created thing can really satisfy our souls' desires, for no creature possesses all of perfect good in itself, but only that good in which it participates. A rivulet of goodness from the divine fountain may flow down to it from above, but the fountain itself always remains in God. Why then should we desire to leave the fountain and follow the rivulet? Every manifestation of good in the creature is but an image of the perfect goodness which is in God, nay, which is God Himself. Why then should we desire to leave the reality to grasp the image? The dove sent out from Noah's ark could not find, amid the raging waters, a place of rest for her feet (Gen. viii. 8). Thus our souls, amid the vast multitude of earthly comforts, can find nothing to satisfy fully their immortal de-

sires, because these things are so very frail and fleeting in character. Does not that man do himself injury who loves anything beneath the dignity of his nature? Our souls are far more noble than any created thing because redeemed by the passion and death of God. Why then should we stoop to love the creature? Would not that be inconsistent with the dignity to which God has exalted the human soul? Whatever we love, we love because of its power, its wisdom, or its beauty. Now what is more powerful, what is wiser, what is more beautiful, than God? All the power of earthly monarchs is from Him and is subject to Him; all human wisdom, compared with the divine, is foolishness; all creature beauty in comparison with God's is absolute deformity.

If a very powerful earthly sovereign were to send his messengers to seek in marriage a maiden of humble birth and fortune, would not that maiden act very foolishly to reject the hand of the king, and take up with his poor messengers and servants instead? And God, through the beauty of the works of His own hands, desires to call me to Himself and to incite me to love Him alone; why then should my soul, which Christ the heavenly Bridegroom seeks to unite to Himself, cling to a mere creature, as the messenger of this spiritual union which He desires to make with me? These creatures themselves exclaim, "Why dost thou cling so fondly to

us? Why dost thou seek thy highest good in us? We cannot satisfy thy longings. Hastc thee to our common Creator." We dare not hope that the things of earth will reciprocate our love; nor do they first love us; but God, who is love (1 John iv. 16), cannot but love those who love Him; nay more, He even anticipates all our desires and all our love with His own love. Ah! how much then ought we love Him who first so dearly loved us. He loved us before we had any being, for it is because of His divine love that we were born into the world. He loved us when we were yet enemies (Rom. v. 10); for it is because of His divine love and compassion that He sent His Son to redeem us. He loved us when we had fallen into sin; for it is because of His divine love, that He does not instantly deliver us over to death, when we transgress against Him, but patiently awaits our conversion. It is because of His divine love that above what we deserve, aye, even in very opposition to our just deserts, He is leading us to His heavenly mansions. Without the love of God never couldst thou come to a saving knowledge of God. Without that love all knowledge would be worthless; nay more, it would be harmful to thee. Why does love exceed the knowledge of all mysteries (1 Cor. xiii. 2)? Because the latter may be found even in the devil, but the former only in the godly. Why is the devil the most unhappy being? Because he can-

not love the Highest Good. Why is God, on the other hand, the most happy and blessed of all beings? Because He loves all things, and takes delight in all the works of His own hands. Why is the love of God not perfected in us in this life? Simply because we love only as we know; and in this life we know only in part, and as in a riddle (1 Cor. xiii. 12). In heaven we shall be perfectly happy, because we shall love God perfectly, and we shall love Him perfectly because we shall know Him perfectly. But no one may cherish a hope of loving God perfectly in the future life, who does not begin to love Him in this life. The Kingdom of God must begin in the heart of man in this life, or it will never be consummated in the life that is to come. Without the love of God we have no desire for eternal life; and how then can we become sharers of that highest Good, if we do not love it, if we do not desire it, if we do not seek it?

What thy love is, that thou art; because thy love changes thee into itself; love is the very strongest bond, because the lover and the object loved become one. What is it that has joined together a righteous God and lost sinners, so infinitely removed from each other? Infinite love. And that the righteousness of God might not be rendered of no effect Christ interposed His infinite ransom. What is it, moreover, that unites those so far separated from each other, as God the

Almighty Creator and a believing soul, the work of His hands? Love. In Heaven we shall be united to God in the very highest degree. Why? Because we shall love Him in the very highest degree. Love unites and transforms; if thou lovest carnal things, thou art carnal; if thou lovest earthly things, thou shalt become earthly. But flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. xv. 50). If thou lovest God and divine things, thou shalt become divine. The love of God is the chariot of Elijah ascending to heaven. The love of God is the delight of the mind, the paradise of the soul; it destroys the power of the world, conquers the devil, shuts the mouth of hell, and opens wide the gate of heaven. The love of God is the seal of God upon His elect and believing children (Rev. vii. 3). God will not acknowledge as His own in the last judgment, those who are not sealed with this seal. For faith itself, which is the sole means of our justification and salvation, is not genuine unless it shows itself by love (Gal. v. 6); it is not true faith unless it be also an unwavering trust, and such a trust is impossible without the love of God. A benefit is not recognized for which thanks are not rendered; we are not truly thankful to Him whom we do not love. If thy faith is genuine it will recognize the great benefits conferred by Christ, thy Redeemer; aye, it will recognize and render thanks; it will render thanks and it will love Him.

The love of God is life and rest to our souls; when the soul departs through death the body dies; but when God departs from the soul through sin, the soul dies. On the other hand, "God dwells in our hearts by faith" (Eph. iii. 17); He dwells in our souls by love, because the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of the elect by the Holy Spirit (Rom. v. 5). There is no peace of mind without the love of God. The world and the devil are its greatest sources of trouble, but God is its true and highest rest. There is no peace of conscience except to those who are justified by faith; there is no true love of God except in those who have a child-like trust in God. Therefore let the love of ourselves, the love of the world, the love of the creature, die in us, that the love of God may dwell in us; and may God begin that love in us in this life, that He may perfect it in life eternal.

MEDITATION X.

OUR RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

Christ Hath Paid my Debt of Sin.

TRULY, Christ hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (Is. liii. 4). O Lord Jesus, the eternal punishment which we deserve for our sins Thou hast transferred to Thyself; the weight of iniquity which would have sunk us down to hell Thou hast taken upon Thyself. Thou wast wounded for our transgressions; Thou wast bruised for our iniquities; with Thy stripes we are healed; and the Lord hath laid upon Thee the iniquities of us all (Is. liii. 5, 6). Wonderful, indeed, is the exchange Thou dost make; our sins Thou takest upon Thyself, and Thy righteousness Thou dost impute to us; the death due us for our transgressions Thou dost Thyself suffer, and in turn dost bestow eternal life upon us. Therefore I can no longer doubt Thy grace or despair on account of my sins. The very worst that was in us Thou hast taken upon Thyself, how then wilt Thou despise our body and soul, the very best that is in us and the work of Thine own

hands? "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption" (Ps. xvi. 10). Holy indeed must he be whose sins have been blotted out and taken away. "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. xxxii. 1, 2). How can the Lord impute our iniquities to us after He hath once imputed them to another? For the sins of the people He hath smitten His dearly-beloved Son; therefore by His knowledge shall he justify many, and He shall bear their iniquities (Is. liii. 12). How shall He justify His people? Give ear, O my soul, and listen! He will justify them by His knowledge, that is by a saving acknowledgment of the divine mercy and grace in Christ, and a firm apprehension thereof through faith. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Thy Son, Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). And again, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9). Faith moreover lays hold of the satisfaction of Christ; for He hath borne their iniquities, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Is. liii. 11, 12). Few righteous souls indeed would He have had, had He not so mercifully received sinners. Few righteous souls wouldst

Thou now have, O Jesus, if Thou didst not so graciously forgive the sins of the unrighteous. How, therefore, will Christ, in the dreadful day of judgment, pass sentence upon the penitent for their sins, when He hath already taken them upon Himself? How will He condemn the guilty sinner when He Himself hath been made sin for him (2 Cor. v. 21)? Will He judge those whom He calls His own friends? Will He judge those for whom He hath interceded? Will He judge those for whom He hath died?

Take courage, O my soul, and forget thy sins, because thy Lord hath forgotten them (Is. xlivi. 25). Whom dost thou fear as the avenger of thy sins but the Lord? And yet He Himself hath rendered satisfaction for thy sins. Now if any one else had offered a ransom for my sins, I could not but be in doubt as to whether my righteous Judge would be willing to accept such a satisfaction. If a mere man or an angel had made an atonement for me, it would still be doubtful whether the ransom offered for my redemption were sufficient. But now there is absolutely no room for doubt. How could He refuse the ransom which Himself hath offered? How could the satisfaction possibly be insufficient, when made by God Himself?

Why art thou still disquieted, O my soul? "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth" (Ps. xxv. 10). "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright

are Thy judgments" (Ps. cxix. 137). Why then art thou disquieted, O my soul? Let the mercy of the Lord cheer thee; let the divine justice encourage thee. For what if God is just? Yet He certainly will not demand a double satisfaction for the sins of a single person. He hath already smitten His Son for our sins, how can He then smite us His servants for the same sins? How can He inflict upon us the punishment which He hath already visited upon His Son for our sins? The truth of the Lord endureth forever (Ps. cxvii. 2). "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he may turn from his way and live" (Ez. xxxiii. 11), says our God. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi. 28), is our Saviour's gracious word. Shall we charge the Lord with a lie, or try to render His mercy of no effect by the weight of our sins? To charge God with a lie and to deny His mercy is one of the greatest sins we can commit; from which it appears that Judas committed a greater sin in despairing of God's mercy, than did the Jews in crucifying Christ.

Yea, rather, where sin abounded, grace hath much more abounded (Rom. v. 20). And His grace infinitely outweighs my sins; for sin is man's act, grace is God's; sin is temporal, but the grace of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. For my sins complete satisfaction hath been rendered;

by Christ's death the grace of God hath been restored to me and established eternally; and to it I flee for refuge, with devout and earnest supplication.

MEDITATION XI.

THE SATISFACTION FOR OUR SINS.

The Death of Christ is the Life of the Godly.

“COME unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. xi. 28), are the precious words of our Saviour. Truly, my dear Lord Jesus, I am burdened beyond measure, and I groan under the awful weight of my sins; but I hasten to Thee, the fountain of living waters. Come unto me, O Lord Jesus, so that I may be able to come unto Thee. I am coming to Thee because Thou hast first come to me. I am coming to Thee, my dear Lord Jesus, and most ardently do I desire Thee, for I can find no good in myself at all. And if I could find anything good in me, I should not so anxiously long for Thee. Truly, O Lord Jesus, I “labor and am heavy laden.” I dare not compare myself to any of Thy saints, nor even to any repentant sinner, unless perchance to the penitent thief upon the cross. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, Thou who didst show Thyself so merciful to that penitent malefactor! Wretchedly, wretchedly,

have I lived ; my life hath been one of sin ; but, oh ! I do desire to die the death of the godly and of the righteous. But godliness and righteousness are far from my heart, and so in Thy godliness and in Thy righteousness I take refuge. Thou didst give Thy life, O Lord Jesus, as a ransom for many (Matt. xx. 28) ; let that come to my succor in my distress. Thy most holy body Thou didst give to be scourged, to be spit upon, to be buffeted, to be lacerated with thorns, and to be crucified, and all for me ; O let that come to my help in my distress. Let Thy most precious blood, which Thou didst so freely shed in Thy bitter sufferings and cruel death upon the cross, and which cleanseth us from all sin (1 John i. 7), be my help. Let Thy most sacred divinity, which sustained Thy human nature in Thy passion, which refrained from the exercise of its glorious power while the adorable mystery of my redemption was being wrought out, and which gave infinite value and merit to Thy suffering for sin, so that God might ransom me—me, a miserable sinner—with His own blood (Acts xx. 28), come to my assistance in my distress. In Thy bleeding wounds is my only remedy ; let them succor me. Let Thy most holy passion be my defence. Let Thy merit, my last refuge and the only remedy for my sins, be my comfort and my support. What Thou hast suffered, O Christ, Thou hast suffered for me. What Thy sufferings have merited, they

have merited for me, and are set over against my unworthiness. God therefore “commendeth His love toward us,” and by the testimony of all men, yea, by its surpassing the comprehension even of the angels, confirms it, “in that while we were yet sinners and enemies Christ died for us” (Rom. v. 8). Who is there who does not wonder at this; who is not struck with deep amazement, that unasked by any one, nay even hated by men, the most merciful Son of God intercedes for sinners and for His enemies? And not only that, but renders a perfect satisfaction to divine justice for their sins, by His poor and humble birth, by His holy life, by His most bitter sufferings and cruel death.

O blessed Lord Jesus, Thou who didst intercede for me, who didst suffer for me, who didst die for me, before ever I showed any desire for Thy merit and passion, and before ever I besought Thee to pay the ransom for my redemption, how couldst Thou now cast me away from Thy face? How wilt Thou deny me the blessed fruits of Thy holy passion, when I cry to Thee out of the depths of my sin (Ps. cxxx. 1), and with tears and groans supplicate Thee for mercy? I was Thine enemy by nature; but since Thou hast died for me, I am become Thy friend, Thy brother, Thy child, through grace. Thou didst have regard to me while yet an enemy and before ever I uttered a prayer to Thee; wilt Thou disregard me when with

tears and prayers I come to Thee as Thy friend? If I come unto Thee Thou wilt not cast me out (John vi. 37), because Thy word is truth itself. Thou hast spoken to us in spirit and truth, and we have received from Thee the words of eternal life (John vi. 68).

Give ear, O my soul, and take courage. Formerly we were sinners by nature; but now are we justified by grace. Before, we were His enemies, now are we His friends and kindred. Before, our help was in the death of Christ, now it is in His life; once we were dead in our sins, now are we quickened with Christ (Eph. ii. 5). O the immeasurable love of God! O the exceeding riches of His grace, by which He makes us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! "O the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us" (Luke i. 78)! Now if the death of Christ hath brought justification and life to us, what shall His life secure for us? If the Saviour by His death paid such a precious ransom for us, what will He accomplish for us by His life and active intercession? For Christ lives and dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. iii. 17); if only we cherish in us a lively remembrance of His most holy merit.

Draw me, O Lord Jesus, that I may possess in deed and in truth that which I look for with an unwavering hope. Let me be with Thee, as Thy

servant, I pray Thee, and let me behold Thy glory, which the Father hath given Thee (John xvii. 24). Let me by and by dwell in that mansion which Thou hast gone to prepare for me in Thy Father's house (John xiv. 2). Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord ; they shall praise Thee forever and forever (Ps. lxxxiv. 4).

MEDITATION XII.

TRUE FAITH—ITS NATURE AND PROPERTIES.

True Faith is Living and Victorious.

CONSIDER, O my beloved soul, the excellency of Faith, and then give thanks to God, from whom alone it comes. Faith alone unites us to our Saviour, so that we derive our spiritual life, our justification, and our salvation, from Him, as the branches draw all their sustenance from the vine (John xv. 4). Adam fell from God's grace, and lost, by his unbelief, the Divine image; but we are received into a state of grace, and are formed anew in the Divine image by faith. Through faith Christ becomes ours and dwells in us (Eph. iii. 17); but where Christ is there is the grace of God; and where the grace of God is, there is the heritage of life eternal. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. xi. 4); so by faith we offer spiritual sacrifices to God, that is, the fruit of our lips (Heb. xiii. 15). By faith Enoch was translated (Heb. xi. 5); so faith, even while we tarry in this life, exalts us above the

mere companionship of men into blessed fellowship with God. For even now Christ dwells in us; we have already eternal life, although hidden (Col. iii. 3). "By faith Noah prepared an ark" (Heb. xi. 7); thus by faith we enter the Church of Christ and our souls are saved, while those who remain in the vast ocean of the world miserably perish. By faith Abraham left his own idolatrous country (Heb. xi. 8); so by faith we come out from the world, forsaking parents, brothers, kindred, and clinging to the word of Christ, who calls us to Himself. By faith he sojourned in a strange country, looking for the land of promise; so by faith we look forward to Jerusalem that is above (Rev. xxi. 2), which God hath prepared for us in heaven. We are strangers and sojourners upon earth (Ps. xxxix. 12), and by faith we desire and hope to come by and by to our heavenly inheritance. By faith Sarah in her old age received strength to bear Isaac, her son (Heb. xi. 11); so by faith, though spiritually dead, we receive strength to bring forth Christ in our lives. For as Christ was once conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so is He daily born in the faithful soul that keeps itself pure and free from worldly defilement. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac (Heb. xi. 17); so also do we by faith offer up in sacrifice our own will, that beloved son of our soul; for he who desires to follow Christ must deny himself (Matt. xvi. 24), that

is, he must renounce his own will, his own honor, his own affections. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob (Heb. xi. 20); so by faith we are made partakers of all God's blessings; for in Abraham's seed, that is in Christ, all nations of the earth are blessed. By faith Joseph prophesied concerning the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones (Heb. xi. 22); so by faith we look forward with glad hearts to our departure from this world, our spiritual Egypt, and to the glorious resurrection of our bodies. By faith Moses was hid three months of his parents (Heb. xi. 23); so faith hides us from the dreadful tyranny of Satan, until at length we shall be led into the royal palace of our God, and adopted as a child by the King of glory. By faith Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God (Heb. xi. 25), than to live in the glory of Egypt; so by faith we may despise the glory and honor and riches of this world, while our hearts are stirred by longing desires for the heavenly kingdom. By faith we choose rather to suffer shame with Christ than all the treasures of this world. By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King (Heb. xi. 27); thus faith inspires and confirms us so that we do not fear the threats of any of earth's tyrants, but with a courageous and resolute spirit obey the voice of our God. By faith Israel kept the Passover (Heb. xi.

28); so also do we celebrate our paschal supper by faith. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us (1 Cor. v. 7); whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed (John vi. 65). By faith the Israelites passed through the Red Sea (Heb. xi. 29); so by faith do we pass through the troublous waves of this world. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down (Heb. xi. 30); so by faith may we lay low all the strongholds of Satan (2 Cor. x. 5). By faith Rahab was preserved alive (Heb. xi. 31); so in the universal ruin that shall overtake this world we shall by faith be saved from destruction. By faith the fathers subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire (Heb. xi. 33, 34); so by faith we may destroy Satan's kingdom, escape the snares and fury of that infernal lion, and be delivered from the awful fires of hell.

But faith is not a mere opinion or empty profession; it is a living and efficacious apprehension of Christ as He is set forth in the gospel. It is a most hearty conviction of God's grace to us, a confident tranquillity of heart, and an undisturbed peace of conscience relying upon the merit of Christ. Such a faith springs from the seed of the divine word; for faith and the Spirit are one, but the word is that by means of which the Holy Spirit is conveyed into our souls. The fruit is of the same nature as the seed. Faith is a divine fruit; therefore the divine

seed, that is, God's word, must always be present. Just as at the creation, light appeared at the word of God, for God said, "Let there be light," and there was light (Gen. i. 3); so the light of faith arises from the light of the divine word. "In Thy light shall we see light," says the Psalmist (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

Since faith unites us so closely to Christ, it is really the mother of all virtues in us. Where faith is, there Christ is; where Christ is, there is a holy life, namely true humility, true gentleness, true love. Christ and the Holy Spirit are never separated; and when the Holy Spirit is present in a soul there is true holiness. Therefore, where the life is not holy, the sanctifying Spirit must be absent; and if the Holy Spirit be absent, Christ cannot be there; and if Christ is not there, then neither is true faith there. Any branch that draws not its life and succor from the vine cannot be considered as united with the vine (John xv. 4); so we are not united to Christ by faith unless we derive all our spiritual life and strength from Him.

Faith is our spiritual light; it illuminates our hearts; it sheds abroad the genial influence of its rays in our good works; and where good works, those bright beams of the spiritual life, are wanting, there the light of true faith hath not yet arisen. Evil deeds are the works of darkness (Rom. xiii. 12); but faith is light; and what communion hath light with darkness (2 Cor. vi. 14)? Evil

works are Satan's seed (Matt. xiii. 25). Faith is Christ's seed. And what concord hath Christ with Satan (2 Cor. vi. 15)? Faith purifies our hearts (Acts xv. 9); but how can there be inward purity of heart where impure words and impure deeds appear outwardly? Faith is our victory (1 John v. 4); how then can there be true faith, where the flesh rules the spirit and leads it captive at its will? Through faith we have Christ dwelling in us, and in Christ we have life eternal; but no impenitent sinner, continuing in his sin, has any part or lot in eternal life; how then can he have Christ in him? How can he lay any claim to true faith? Enkindle in us, O blessed Christ, the light of true faith, that through faith we may obtain eternal salvation!

MEDITATION XIII.

THE SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE OF THE SOUL WITH CHRIST.

Christ is the Spouse of the Soul.

“I WILL betroth thee unto Me forever” (Hos. ii. 19), says Christ to the faithful soul. Christ desired to be present at the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John ii. 2), so as to show us that He had come to the earth to celebrate His spiritual nuptials with believing souls. Rejoice greatly in the Lord and be joyful in thy God, O faithful soul, for He hath clothed thee with the garments of salvation, He hath covered thee with the robe of righteousness, as a bride adorneth herself with jewels (Is. lxi. 2). Rejoice because of the distinguished honor of thy Spouse; rejoice because of the surpassing beauty of thy Spouse; rejoice because of His marvelous love toward thee. His honor is the very greatest, for He is true God, blessed forever (Rom. ix. 5). How great then is the dignity and worth of the soul, since the Creator Himself wishes to espouse it to Himself! His beauty is the very greatest; for His

form is fairer than the children of men (Ps. xlv. 2); since they "beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father" (John i. 14); "His face did shine as the sun" (Matt. xvii. 2); "and His raiment was white as snow" (Mark ix. 3); "grace is poured into His lips" (Ps. xlv. 3); "He is crowned with glory and honor" (Ps. viii. 6). How wonderful then His mercy, that, though He is the perfection of beauty, He does not disdain to choose for His spiritual bride the soul of the sinner, all stained and defiled with sin though it be. Here is the height of majesty in the Bridegroom and the depth of lowness in the bride; surpassing beauty in the Bridegroom, forbidding deformity in the bride; and yet greater is the Bridegroom's love towards His bride than hers towards her most majestic and most beautiful Spouse.

Consider, O faithful soul, His immeasurable love towards thee! A love that brought Him from heaven to earth; a love that bound Him to the post to be scourged; a love that nailed Him to the cross; a love that enclosed Him in the sepulchre; a love that dragged Him down to hell! What led Him to suffer all this, but a tender love for His spouse? And our hearts must be harder than stone and lead if such mighty love as this does not draw them upwards to God, from whom it first drew God Himself down to men. The bride was naked and bare (Ez. xvi. 22); nor could she thus appear in the

royal palace of the heavenly King ; but He clothed her with the garments of salvation, and covered her with the robe of righteousness (Is. lxi. 10). When she lay wrapped in the filthy garments of her sins and in the shameful rags of her iniquities, He gave fine linen, clean and white, in which she might clothe herself ; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints (Rev. xix. 8). This garment is the righteousness of her Spouse, procured by His death and passion.

Jacob served fourteen years to win Rachel for his wife ; but Christ for nearly thirty years endured hunger, thirst, cold, poverty, ignominy, reproaches, bonds, the scourge, the vinegar and gall, and the awful death of the cross, that He might prepare for Himself and win as His bride the believing soul. Samson went down and sought a wife from among the Philistines, a people devoted to destruction (Judges xiv. 3), but the Son of God came down from heaven to choose His bride from among men condemned and devoted to eternal death. The whole race to which the bride belonged was hostile to the heavenly Father, but He reconciled it to His Father by His most bitter passion. The bride was polluted in her own blood (Ez. xvi. 22), and was cast out upon the face of the earth ; but He washed her in the water of baptism, and cleansed her in the most holy laver of regeneration (Eph. v. 26) ; her bloody stains He cleansed

with His own blood, for the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin (1 John i. 7). Foul and defiled was His bride, but He anointed her with the oil of His mercy and grace (Ez. xvi. 9). She was not honorably attired as His spouse, but He decked her with ornaments (Ez. xvi. 11), and adorned her with the varied virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit. She was wretchedly poor, so that she could bring Him no dower, so He mercifully gave her the earnest of His Spirit (Eph. i. 14), and accepted from her the earnest of her flesh, and carried it with Him into heaven. He found His bride famishing with hunger, and He gave her to eat fine wheat and honey and oil (Ez. xvi. 19), and with His own body and blood He continues to feed her unto eternal life. She is often disobedient and unfaithful to her marriage vow to Christ, her heavenly Bridegroom, in her unholy alliance with the world and the devil, but He, out of His abundant love, receives her again whenever she returns to Him in true penitence.

Acknowledge, O faithful soul, these many marvelous instances of Christ's love to thee; cherish thou the love of Him, who for love of thee entered the virgin's womb. We ought to love Him as much more than we love ourselves, as He who gave Himself for us is greater than we. We ought to yield our whole life unto Him, who for love of us yielded Himself up wholly unto us. He who

does not love the Christ who first loved him, must be deservedly held as basely ungrateful. O how much we ought to love Him who for pure love of us laid aside, as it were, His divine majesty! O happy soul, that is united to Christ by the bonds of this spiritual marriage! Thou mayst securely and confidently appropriate to thyself all the benefits of Christ's redemption, just as a wife shines resplendently in the glory that belongs to her husband.

It is by faith alone that we are made partakers of this blessed spiritual union, as it is written, "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness" (Hos. ii. 19). By faith we are engrafted as branches into Christ, the spiritual vine (John xv. 2), so that we derive all our life and strength from Him; and as those united in marriage are no longer twain but one flesh (Matt. xix. 6), so "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17), because Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. iii. 17). Faith, if it is genuine, worketh by love (Gal. v. 6). Just as the high priests, in the old economy, were obliged to marry virgins, so this heavenly High Priest unites to Himself in spiritual union such souls as keep themselves pure and unspotted from the embraces of the world and the flesh and the devil. O Christ, do Thou graciously make us worthy to be admitted finally to the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7). Amen.

MEDITATION XIV.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

Christ's Cradle glows with a Heavenly Light.

LET us for a little while withdraw our minds from temporal things, and contemplate the mystery of our Lord's birth. The Son of God came down from heaven, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. iv. 5). God became man, that man might become a partaker of divine grace and of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4). Christ chose to be born into the world in the evening of the world's life, to signify that the benefits of His incarnation pertain not to this present life, but to eternal life. He chose to be born in the time of the peaceful Augustus, because He was the blessed peacemaker between man and God. He chose to be born in the time of Israel's servitude, because He is the true liberator and defender of His people. He chose to be born under the reign of a foreign prince, seeing that His kingdom is not of this world (John xviii. 36). He is born of a virgin to signify that He is born in the hearts of spiritual

virgins only (2 Cor. xi. 2), that is, in those who are not joined to the world or to the devil, but to God by one Spirit. He is born pure and holy, that He might sanctify our impure and defiled birth. He is born of a virgin espoused to a man, that He might set forth the honor of marriage as a divine institution. He was born in the darkness of the night, who came as the true light to illumine the darkness of the world. He who is the true food of our souls is laid in a manger. He is born among the beasts of the stall, that He might restore to their former dignity and honor sinful men, who through their sins had made themselves little better than the beasts. He is born in Bethlehem, the house of bread, who brought with Himself from heaven the bread of life for our souls. He is the first and only-begotten of His mother here on earth, who according to His divine nature is the first and only-begotten of His Father in heaven. He is born poor and needy (2 Cor. viii. 9), that He might prepare the riches of heaven for us. He is born in a mean stable, that He might lead us back to the royal palace of His Father in heaven. He is sent from heaven as the messenger of redemptive grace, because no one on earth knew its exceeding greatness. It is with good reason that He, a heavenly messenger, should bring us the tidings of those heavenly blessings that are reserved for us at His right hand above. The angelic hosts

rejoice at the birth of Christ because, through the incarnation of the Son of God, they can have us poor mortals as the companions of their blessedness. This great wonder is first announced to shepherds, because as the true Shepherd of souls He had come at that time to bring back His lost sheep into His fold. The glad tidings of great joy are proclaimed to the despised and lowly, because no one can become a sharer of that joy, who is not lightly esteemed in his own eyes. The nativity is announced to those watching their flocks by night, because only those can become partakers of this great gift to man whose hearts are watchful toward God, and not those who are fast asleep in sin. And now the multitude of the heavenly host, who had so sorely grieved over the sin of our first parent, shout aloud for joy. The splendor of our Lord and King appears in the heavens, whose lowness upon the earth looked so mean in the eyes of men. The angel bids the shepherds "Fear not," because of the birth of Him who should remove from us every cause of fear. Good tidings of great joy are announced, because the author and giver of all joy was born into the world. They are bidden rejoice, because the enmity between God and man, the real cause of all our sorrow, was removed. "Glory to God in the highest," they sang, because by the wilful transgression of His command our first par-

ent sought to rob God of His glory. The birth of Christ brought true peace to men, who before this were the enemies of God, were at war with their own consciences, and at variance among themselves. True peace was thus restored to earth, because he was overcome who had led us captive at his will.

Let us now go with the shepherds to the manger of Christ, that is, His church, and as He lay in that manger in swaddling clothes, so in the sacred scriptures, we shall find our Saviour. Let us also with a lively recollection of the words of this mystery, like Mary, the blessed mother of our Lord, keep pondering them continually in our hearts (Luke ii. 19). Let us with glad voices join in the angels' song, and render unto the Lord the thanks due unto His name for His marvelous benefits to us. Let us rejoice and shout for joy with the whole multitude of the heavenly host. For if the angels rejoiced so greatly on our account, how much more ought we rejoice, to whom this Child is born, to whom this Son is given (Is. ix. 6). If the Israelites lifted up their voices in jubilant shouts when the Ark of the Covenant was brought back to them (2 Sam. vi. 16), which was a type and a shadow of the incarnation of our dear Lord, how much more ought we rejoice, since our Lord Himself hath come down to us, in the assumption of our human nature. If Abraham re-

joiced to see the day of the Lord (John viii. 56), when the Lord assuming at that time bodily shape, appeared to him, what ought we to do, seeing that our Lord hath taken our nature into a perpetual and indissoluble union with Himself? O let us admire the marvelous goodness of our God, who, when we could not ascend to Him, hesitated not to descend to us. Let us stand in wonder at the marvelous power of our God, who was able to unite in one two natures so diverse as the divine and huinan, so that one and the same Person is now both God and man. Let us admire the marvelous wisdom of our God, who could devise a scheme for our redemption, which neither angels nor men could have devised. Infinite good was offended; an infinite satisfaction was required. Man had offended God, from man the satisfaction for sin must be required. But finite man could not possibly render an infinite satisfaction, nor could divine justice be satisfied but on the payment of an infinite ransom. For this reason God became man that, for man who had sinned, He might render a perfect satisfaction for sin, and as God who was infinite He might pay an infinite price for our redemption. Well may we wonder at this stupendous reconciliation of divine justice and mercy, which no one, before God was manifest in the flesh, could have devised, nor after He was so manifested, could fully comprehend. Let us

stand in wonder at this mystery, but let us not too curiously pry into it. Let us desire reverently to study it, although we cannot fully understand it. Rather let us confess our ignorance than deny the power of God.

MEDITATION XV.

THE SAVING BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION.

Let us be deeply grateful for the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

"BEHOLD, I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke ii. 10), said the angel at the birth of our Saviour. Great indeed is the joy thus announced, aye, greater than the human mind can conceive. It was a dreadful thing for us to lie under the holy wrath of God, to be led captive by the devil at his will, and to be under sentence of eternal condemnation ; but it was still more dreadful that men were ignorant of their awful condition, or utterly indifferent to it. And now the angel brings the good tidings that He hath come into the world who will free us from all these evils. He came as the Physician to the spiritually sick, as the Redeemer to the captives of sin, as the Way to those who had wandered afar off, as the Life to the dead in trespasses and sins, and as a Saviour to the lost. As Moses (Ex. iii. 10) was sent by the Lord to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of

Egypt, so was Christ sent by the Father to redeem mankind from the bondage of the devil. As the dove, after the waters of the flood had abated from the face of the earth, brought back an olive leaf to Noah in the ark (Gen. viii. 11), so Christ came to earth to preach peace and reconciliation between man and God. Well may we rejoice, then, and magnify the mercy of our God. What good thing will He, who loved us while we were yet His enemies (Rom. v. 8), disdaining not to take our human nature into the very closest union with His divinity, withhold from those who are partakers with Him of the same flesh? Who has ever hated His own flesh (Eph. v. 29)? How can He possibly cast us off, when by an exercise of such exalted and infinite mercy, He hath made us partakers of His own nature?

Who in most exalted thought can reach this stupendous mystery, much less express it in words? Here we have the most exalted sublimity and the basest vileness; the greatest power and the most abject helplessness; the most glorious majesty and the most inglorious weakness. What can be more sublime than God, or viler than man? Who hath more power than God, or greater moral helplessness than man? Who can be so glorious as God, and so weak as man? But that sublime power devises a plan of redemption, which unites all these elements, when infinite justice required

such a union. What finite mind can grasp the greatness of this mystery? An adequate ransom, infinite in value, was demanded for man's offense, because man had turned himself away from God, the infinite Good. But what could be an adequate satisfaction to an infinite God? Therefore infinite justice takes from itself, as it were, an adequate satisfaction offered by itself, and God the Creator suffers in human flesh, lest man the work of His hands should suffer eternally. Infinite Good was offended, and no one but a Mediator of infinite power could intercede for us. And who is infinite but God only? Hence God reconciled the world unto Himself (2 Cor. v. 19). God Himself became the Mediator. God Himself redeemed mankind with His own blood (Acts xx. 28).

Who can understand this marvelous mystery? The almighty Creator had been offended, and yet the creature who had committed the offense manifested no anxiety for a propitiation or reconciliation, but He who had been offended assumed our flesh to make reconciliation for us. Man had forsaken God, and allied himself to the devil, God's bitter enemy; and yet He, who had been thus deserted, with tender concern seeks the deserter, and most graciously begs him to return to Him again. Man had gone away from infinite Goodness itself, and had fallen into infinite depths of evil; but that very infinite Goodness, having paid an infinite price for

his redemption, rescues him from those infinite depths of evil. O does not this infinite mercy exceed the highest thought of the finite human mind? Christ hath brought to our poor human nature a greater glory than it lost by Adam's sin. In Christ we receive more than we lost in Adam. Where sin had abounded, divine grace hath much more abounded. In Adam we lost our primal innocence, in Christ we receive a full and completed righteousness (Rom. v. 18). Some may justly regard the power of God as wonderful, but still more wonderful is His grace; although so far as God is concerned they are equally wonderful, because both are infinite. Others may admire the wondrous power of God in creation; but still more may we admire the marvels of His grace in redemption, although both creation and redemption alike manifest His infinite power. It was a great thing to create man in the first place, when, as yet not existing, he could deserve neither good nor ill at God's hands; but to redeem man, when he justly merited condemnation, and to take upon Himself the punishment due for man's transgression, that seems to me a still greater thing. It is truly wonderful when we consider how God hath formed in us our flesh and our bones; but it is still more wonderful to think how He was willing to become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone (Eph. v. 30).

O my soul, give unceasing thanks to God who created thee, when as yet thou hadst no being; who redeemed thee, when through sin thou wast under eternal condemnation; and who hath prepared for thee joys unspeakable and full of glory, if thou by faith dost cling to Christ thy Saviour.

MEDITATION XVI.

THE SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT OF THE GODLY.

*What is God to the soul? He is its Light, its
Healing Balm, its Bread of Life.*

GOD hath most graciously prepared a great supper, but those who would enjoy it must come with hearts hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

He who tastes not, perceives not the sweetness of this heavenly feast ; and he who does not hunger for it, does not taste it. To believe in Christ is to come to this heavenly banquet. But no one can believe in Christ who does not acknowledge his sins in true contrition and penitence. Contrition is the spiritual hunger of our souls ; and by faith our souls are spiritually fed.

The Lord God fed the Israelites in the wilderness with manna, angels' food (Ex. xvi. 4, Ps. lxxviii. 25) ; but in this blessed feast of the new covenant, God feeds our souls with heavenly manna, that is, the pardon of our sins; nay more, with the Body and Blood of His own Son, who is the Lord of the angels. Christ is the living Bread,

who came down from heaven (John vi. 51), that He might give life to the world. One who fills himself with the husks that the swine eat, that is, with the carnal delights of this world, cares naught for the blessedness of this spiritual feast. The carnal mind has no conception of that which is true blessedness to the soul ; in this wilderness world God feeds our souls with His own manna, when earthly sustenance fails us, and when every earthly comfort departs. Those who had just married wives, in the parable (Luke xiv. 20), were backward in coming to the supper; but souls that are not joined to the devil through sin, nor allied to the world through its pleasures, hasten to this gospel feast. "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," says the apostle (2 Cor. xi. 2). We must keep our souls from all unholy alliance with the world, if God is to espouse us to Himself in this spiritual union. Those who in the parable of the supper were occupied with looking after their newly purchased lands also refused the kind invitation (Luke xiv. 18); and those engrossed in the pleasures of this world, have no longings after the blessedness of the heavenly banquet. Desire is the food of the soul ; our souls do not come to this mystical feast if they have no desire for it ; and a soul that places its happiness in the comforts of this world cannot desire the heavenly delights of the gospel. When

the rich young man heard that he must give up the earthly riches in which his soul delighted, if he would follow Christ, he went away sorrowful (Matt. xix. 22). Christ, our heavenly Elijah (2 Kings iv. 3, 4), does not pour the oil of heavenly grace into any vessel that is not first entirely emptied ; and the love of God does not take possession of any soul, from which the love of self and the love of the world have not first been excluded. Where our treasure is, there will our heart be also (Matt. vi. 21) ; if the world is thy treasure, thy heart is in the world. Love has a uniting power ; if thou lovest earthly things, thou wilt be joined to earthly things. Love has an assimilating power ; if thou lovest the world, thou wilt become worldly ; if thou lovest heavenly things, thou wilt become heavenly-minded.

In the parable, those who traded in oxen and merchandise (Luke xiv. 19) did not come to Christ. Those who set their hearts upon earthly riches (Ps. lxxii. 10) do not seek the heavenly; earthly riches seem for a time to satisfy the desires of the soul, so that it does not seek in God that which alone would afford it full and perfect satisfaction. The riches of the world consist in material things, as silver and gold, houses and lands, flocks and herds. But no material thing can possibly satisfy the longings of the soul, which is far more excellent than any material object, for

all these have been created for the use and benefit of the soul. How utterly material things fail to meet and satisfy the needs of the soul, appears in death, when we must give them all up. It is passing strange that we should so set our hearts upon these earthly possessions, when our hold upon them is so frail and short-lived. When Adam forsook the comforts afforded him in God, and sought delight through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he was driven out of paradise (Gen. iii. 24); so our souls, if they turn from God the Creator to the creature, are deprived of heavenly comforts, and shall be forever driven away from the tree of life.

But what remains to those who neglect this heavenly feast? The world passeth away and the lust thereof (1 John ii. 17, 1 Cor. vii. 31); and so shall all they who set their hearts upon it; all created things shall perish, and so shall they who rest their hopes in them. God declares that those who prefer the possessions and pleasures of this life to the blessings and comforts of His heavenly feast, shall not taste of His supper (Luke xiv. 24). If the supper be neglected, the hungry must go unfed; and if Christ be rejected, there remaineth no more remedy for sin. Those who despised the invitation shall suffer the pangs of eternal hunger, and shall dwell forever in the outer darkness; those who refused to heed the word of Christ:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden" (Matt. xi. 28), shall one day hear that dreadful word: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. xxv. 41). The Sodomites were consumed by fire sent down from heaven, when, graciously invited to this heavenly feast of good things, through the preaching of Lot, they wilfully refused to come; and so those who have insolently spurned the gospel invitation shall be consumed by the fires of divine wrath, that shall burn forever and ever. The five foolish virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, without taking oil in their vessels with them, framed various excuses for their delay; but meanwhile the door was shut (Matt. xxv. 10); and so those whose hearts are not filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit in this world, will not be admitted by Christ into a participation of His heavenly joy; but will find that the door of long-suffering, the door of mercy, the door of everlasting consolation, the door of hope, the door of grace, the door of good works, shall be fast shut against them.

Besides this there is an inward call of Christ to our souls, and blessed is he who heeds it. Christ often knocks at the door of our hearts with holy longings, devout aspirations, pious meditations, and blessed is he who throws wide open his heart's door to the Christ (Rev. iii. 20). As soon as thou dost experience in thy heart some longing after the

grace of God, thou mayst certainly conclude that it is Christ knocking at the door of thy heart. Oh, admit Him, lest He pass by, and afterwards close against thee the door of His mercy. As soon as thou perceivest in thy heart the faintest spark of pious thoughts, conclude at once that it was enkindled by the fervor of God's love, through the Holy Spirit. Oh, feed and keep alive that holy flame that it may kindle into a glowing fire of love for God. Oh, beware, lest thou quench the Holy Spirit and hinder the Lord's work in thy soul (1 Thess. v. 19). He who destroys the temple of God shall suffer the severest judgment of God (1 Cor. iii. 17). Our heart is the temple of God; and that we destroy when we refuse to heed the inward call of the Holy Spirit through God's word. The prophets of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. i. 21), but now under the gospel all the truly pious feel the inward motions and drawings of the Holy Spirit. Blessed indeed are all they who hear and follow Him.

MEDITATION XVII.

THE BENEFITS OF BAPTISM.

Baptism is a Holy Washing.

CALL to mind, O faithful soul, the wonderful grace of God bestowed upon thee in holy baptism. Baptism is the washing of regeneration (Titus iii. 5); therefore he who hath been spiritually washed in the laver of baptism is no longer held, body and soul, under the power of a carnal nature, but because he hath been born again of God, through water and the Spirit (John iii. 5) he is a son of God, and if a son then an heir of eternal blessedness (Rom. viii. 17). As the Eternal Father, at the baptism of Christ, declared, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. iii. 17), so all who believe and are baptized receive the adoption of sons. As the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, at Christ's baptism, so He is also present at our baptism and gives it all its efficacy; nay, more, communicates Himself to believing souls in this holy ordinance, and so worketh in them that "they become wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matt. x. 16). As it

was at the creation, so is it at our regeneration. For as at the creation of the world, the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. i. 2), and imparted to them a vital energy, so in the water of baptism the same Holy Spirit is present to render it efficacious for our regeneration. Our beloved Saviour, Christ Himself, submitted to baptism that He might make it plain that through baptism we are to be made members of His body. Often a remedy is applied to the head that other parts of the body may be healed ; our spiritual head is Christ, and He submitted to holy baptism that the members of His mystical body might enjoy its saving benefits. Under the old economy God entered into covenant with His people by circumcision (Gen. xvii. 11) ; so in the new economy we are received into covenant relations with God by baptism (Col. ii. 11, 12), because baptism has superseded circumcision. Let not him who is in covenant with God fear the devil. Those who are baptized into Christ put on Christ (Gal. iii. 27), and thus the saints are said to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. vii. 14). The perfect righteousness of Christ is the glorious robe of His saints ; let not him therefore who is clothed in this robe fear the least spot of sin.

There was at Jerusalem, by the sheep market, a pool (John v. 2) into which at certain times an

angel went down and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had (John v. 4). The water of baptism is that pool, which heals us of the malady of sin, when the Holy Spirit descends into it and troubles it, as it were, with the blood of Christ, who gave Himself as a sacrifice for us, just as the sacrificial lambs were washed in that pool at Jerusalem. At Christ's baptism the heavens were opened (Matt. iii. 16); so at our baptism the gates of heaven are opened to our souls. At the baptism of Christ all three persons of the adorable Trinity were present; so they are at our baptism. And so in that word of promise, which is united to the element of water, faith receives the grace of the heavenly Father who adopts us, the merit of the blessed Son who cleanses us from sin, and the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit who regenerates us.

Pharaoh and all his host perished in the Red Sea, while the Israelites passed over safely (Ex. xiv. 28); thus in baptism all our sins are destroyed, and the believing soul passes safely over to the promised inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. Baptism may be likened to that sea of glass like unto crystal which St. John saw in his wonderful vision (Rev. iv. 6); through it as through a glass the glory of the Son of Righteousness shines into our souls; but that sea was before the throne of

the Lamb. That throne of the Lamb is the Church, in which alone the grace of baptism is deposited. The prophet Ezekiel in his vision saw waters issuing from under the temple (Ezek. xlvii. 1) which carried life and healing to all things (Ezek. xlvii. 9); so in God's spiritual temple, the Church, the saving waters of baptism are still streaming forth, into whose depths our sins are cast (Micah vii. 19), and whose streams bring spiritual healing and life unto all to whom they come. Baptism is that spiritual flood in which our sinful flesh is drowned : the foul raven, the devil departs, not to return, but the dove, the Holy Spirit, returns with the olive leaf, that is, with peace and quietness, to the weary soul. Call to mind, therefore, O faithful soul, this wonderful peace offered to thee in baptism, and for it give due thanks to God.

Moreover, the more richly blessed the baptismal grace bestowed upon thee, the more carefully thou shouldest guard it. "We are buried with Christ by baptism unto death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. v. 4). We have been made whole, therefore let us sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us (John vi. 14). We have put on the righteousness of Christ, a garment of inexpressible preciousness ; therefore let us not defile it with sin. Our old man was crucified and put to death in baptism ; let the

new man now live. We have been regenerated and renewed in the spirit of our mind in baptism (Eph. iv. 23); let not the flesh then rule the spirit! "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17), let not then the oldness of the flesh prevail over the newness of the Spirit. We have become the sons of God by our new spiritual birth; let us live worthily, therefore, of our Heavenly Father. We have become temples of the Holy Spirit; let us therefore prepare an abode that will be pleasing to such an honored Guest. We have been taken into covenant relation with God; let us take heed therefore that we do not serve the devil, and so deprive ourselves of the grace of this covenant.

O Thou most blessed Trinity, accomplish all this in our souls, we humbly pray Thee! O Thou One only God, who hast bestowed Thy grace upon us in baptism, help us, we beseech Thee, to persevere in that grace unto the end.

MEDITATION XVIII.

THE SAVING COMMUNION OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF CHRIST.

The Flesh of Christ is Life to the Soul.

“WHOSO eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life” (John vi. 54), says our Lord Jesus Christ. Marvelous is the goodness of our Saviour, that He not only assumed our human nature in His incarnation, and carried it with Him to His throne of heavenly glory, but that He also gives us His own body and blood to nourish our souls unto eternal life. O the delightful blessings which He here offers to my soul! O the glorious repast for which I so ardently long! O the heavenly and angelic food of this holy supper of our Lord! Though the angels desired to look into this great mystery (1 Pet. i. 12), yet Christ took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham (Heb. ii. 16). Our Saviour is more nearly allied to us than to the angels themselves; and by this we know that He loveth us, because He hath given us of His Spirit (1 John iv. 13), and not of His Spirit

only, but of His own body and blood as well. For so Christ, Himself the Truth, speaks of the Eucharistic bread and wine, "This is my body: this is my blood" (Matt. xxvi. 26-28). How can the Lord ever forget those whom He hath redeemed, those whom He hath nourished, with His own body and blood? He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in me and I in him (John vi. 56).

I do not greatly wonder, in view of all this, that the very hairs of our heads are all numbered (Matt. x. 30); that our names are written in heaven (Luke x. 20); that we are graven upon the palms of the Lord's hands (Is. xl ix. 16); that we are carried in His bosom (Is. xlvi. 3), since we are fed with Christ's precious body and blood. Inexpressibly great must be the value of our souls, since they are fed with the precious ransom of their own redemption. Great indeed is the honor put upon our bodies, inasmuch as they are the dwelling-places of our souls redeemed and fed by the body of Christ, and are the temples of the Holy Ghost and the abodes of the adorable Trinity. It cannot be that they should ever remain in the grave, since they are thus nourished with the body and blood of our Lord. He is the wonderful bread of life. We partake of it and become one body with Christ. We are members of Christ; we are animated by His Spirit; we are nourished with His body and

blood. He is the bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world (John vi. 33), of which if any man eat he shall never hunger. He is the bread of grace and mercy, of which, if any man eat, he tastes and sees that the Lord is good (Ps. xxxiv. 8), and of His fulness receives grace for grace (John i. 16). He is the bread of life, not only living, but life-giving (John vi. 58); so that he that eateth of Him shall live forever. This is the bread that came down from heaven, nor is it only heavenly in its own nature, but to all those who partake of it, in the spirit and with saving faith, it will give a place among the heavenly guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb; aye, heavenly guests they shall be, because they shall never die, but be raised up at the last day. And yet they shall not be raised to judgment, because they who eat of this bread shall not come to judgment nor to condemnation, for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. viii. 1); but they shall arise to life and eternal salvation. For whosoever eateth the flesh of the Son of Man, and drinketh His blood, hath life in himself and shall live by Christ (John vi. 53, 57). His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed (John vi. 55). Let us not seek then to feast our souls on our own dead works, but with the blessed food of the Lord's own providing; let us not try to satisfy them with the perishing things

of earth, but with the fatness of the house of the Lord (Ps. xxxvi. 8).

He is the true fountain of life: whosoever drinketh of the water that Jesus will give him, it shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life (John iv. 14). “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat” (Is. lv. 1). Let all those that are athirst come, and come thou, O my thirsty soul, who art tormented with the scorching heat of thy sins. What if thou hast no money, no merit of thine own, to offer; then hasten all the more to this refreshing fountain. If thou hast no merit of thine own, then hasten all the more eagerly to the saving merit of Christ thy Saviour. Fly hither, then, and buy without money and without price. Here is the place of rest for Christ and the soul, from which our sins may not deter us, nor will our merits help us to attain it. But what can our own merits do for us? “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” says the prophet (Isaiah lv. 2). We cannot satisfy our souls by our good works, nor purchase divine grace by our own merits.

Then hearken diligently, O my soul, and eat that which is good and delight thyself in fatness (Is. lv. 2). “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John vi. 63); and

these are words of eternal life: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (I Cor. x. 16)? We cling unto the Lord; thus we are one spirit with Him (I Cor. vi. 17). We are united to Him, not only because He hath assumed our nature, but also because His body and blood are communicated to us in the Holy Supper. I do not therefore ask with the unbelieving Jews—"How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" (John vi. 53), but I rather exclaim, "How marvelous it is that the Lord hath given us His body to eat and His blood to drink!" I do not pry into the mysteries of His power, but I do wonder at the marvels of His mercy. I do not curiously inquire into His glorious majesty, but I do humbly adore His boundless goodness. In His actual presence in the Holy Supper I profoundly believe, though of the mode of that presence I am ignorant, and yet I do certainly know that it is of the closest and most intimate character. We are members of His body, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone (Eph. v. 30).

My soul desires to be swallowed up in the contemplation of this profoundest mystery; words fail me to set forth or properly express this great goodness of the Lord; I am utterly dumbfounded at the thought of the marvelous grace of the Lord and the glory that awaits His saints!

MEDITATION XIX.

THE MYSTERY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

*To Stand in Wonder Before it, not to Pry into it,
is Truest Wisdom.*

IN the Holy Supper of our Lord we have a mystery placed before us that should cause the deepest awe and excite our profoundest adoration. There is the treasury and store-house of God's grace. We know (Gen. ii. 9) that the tree of life was planted by God in Paradise, that its fruit might preserve our first parents and their posterity in the blessedness of an immortality which He had bestowed upon them at their creation. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also placed in Paradise; but that which God gave them for their salvation and eternal life, and to serve as a test of their obedience, became the occasion of their death and eternal condemnation, when they miserably yielded to Satan's enticements and followed their own sinful desires. So in this Holy Supper we have the true tree of life again set before us, that sweet tree (Ez. xlvii. 12), whose leaves are for medicine and whose fruit

is for salvation ; aye, its sweetness is such as to destroy the bitterness of all afflictions, and even of death itself. The Israelites were fed with manna in the wilderness as with bread from heaven (Ex. xvi. 15) ; in this Holy Supper we have the true manna which came down from heaven to give life unto the world ; here is that bread of heaven, that angels' food, of which if any man eat he shall never hunger (John vi. 35, 51). The children of Israel had the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, where they could hear the Lord speaking with them face to face (Ex. xxv. 21, 22) ; but here we have the true ark of the covenant, the most holy body of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. ii. 3) ; here we have the true mercy seat in the precious blood of Christ (Rom. iii. 25), through which God hath made us accepted in the Beloved (Eph. i. 6). Nor does Christ simply speak the word of comfort to our souls, He also takes up His abode in us ; He feeds our souls not with heavenly manna, but, what is far better, with His own blessed self. Here is the true gate of heaven to our souls, and the ladder reaching from earth to heaven on which the angels of God ascend and descend (Gen. xxviii. 12) ; for is not He who is in heaven greater than the heavens ? Can heaven be as close to God as the flesh and the human nature which He assumed in the incarnation ? Heaven is indeed the dwelling-place of

God (Is. lxvi. 1), and yet the Holy Spirit rests upon the human nature assumed by Christ (Is. xi. 2). God is in heaven, and yet in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col. ii. 9). Truly this is a great and infallible pledge of our salvation; He could not possibly have given us a greater, for what is greater than Himself? What can be more intimately united to the Lord than His own human nature, which He hath taken, in His incarnation, into fellowship with the adorable Trinity, and thus made the treasury of all the blessings that heaven has to bestow? What is so intimately joined to Him as His own body and blood? With this truly heavenly food He refreshes our souls, who are as miserable worms of the dust before Him, and makes us partakers of His own nature; why then shall we not enjoy His gracious favor? Who ever yet hated his own flesh (Eph. v. 29)? How then can the Lord hate us, to whom He giveth His body to eat and His blood to drink? How can He possibly forget those to whom He hath given the pledge of His own body? How can Satan gain the victory over us when we are strengthened and made meet for our spiritual conflicts with this bread of heaven?

Christ holds us dear because He hath bought us at so dear a price; He holds us dear because He feeds our souls with so dear and precious food; He holds us dear because we are members of His body, of His flesh (Eph. v. 30). This is the only sover-

eign remedy for all the diseases of our souls; here is the only efficacious remedy for mortality; for what sin is so heinous but the sacred flesh of God may expiate it? What sin is so great but it may be healed by the life-giving flesh of the Christ? What sin so deadly in its effects but it may be atoned for by the death of the Son of God? What darts of the devil so fiery but they may be quenched in this fountain of divine grace? What conscience is so stained with sin but it may be cleansed by the blood of Jesus? The Lord journeyed with the Israelites of old in a pillar of cloud and fire (Ex. xiii. 21); but here we have present with us not a cloud, but the Sun of Righteousness Himself (Mal. iv. 2), the blessed Light of our souls. Here we are sensible not of the fire of the divine wrath, but of the glowing flame of divine love, which does not withdraw afar off from us, but comes and makes its abode with us (John xiv. 23).

Our first parents were placed in Paradise, that most charming and delightful garden, the type of the eternal blessedness of the heavenly paradise, that being mindful of God's goodness to them, they might render due obedience to their Creator.

But behold, in this holy supper, more than a paradise; for here the soul of the creature is spiritually fed with the flesh of his almighty Creator. The conscience is cleansed from all its guilty stains in the blood of the Son of God. The members of

Christ, their spiritual head, are nourished with His own body ; the believing soul feasts itself at a divine and heavenly banquet. The holy flesh of God, which the angelic hosts adore in the unity of the divine nature, before which archangels bow in lowly reverence, and before which the principalities and powers of heaven tremble and stand in awe, is become the spiritual nourishment of our souls. Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad (Ps. xcvi. 11), but still more let the believing soul exult and sing for joy, to whom God giveth such an unspeakable gift !

MEDITATION XX.

A SERIOUS PREPARATION FOR THE HOLY SUPPER.

Be thou a worthy guest of Christ in His Holy Supper.

THIS Holy Supper is no common meal, nor is it the banquet of an earthly king; but here we have placed before us the holy mystery of the body and blood of Christ, in which we are to participate. Certainly then a worthy preparation is needful, that we may not, unworthily eating of it, find death instead of life, and receive judgment instead of mercy.

How the holy Patriarch trembles, how he fears, although so remarkable for the strength of his faith, when the Son of God in human form appears to him, and announces the impending destruction of Sodom (Gen. xviii. 2). But here the Lamb of God is set forth before us, and that not to be curiously gazed upon, but to be tasted and eaten. When Uzziah rashly and inconsiderately drew near to the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord immediately smote him with leprosy (2 Chron. xxvi. 16); what wonder

that he who eateth of this bread and drinketh of this wine unworthily, should eat and drink to his condemnation? For here is the true ark of the covenant, of which the old was only a type.

The apostle tells us in one word what constitutes true preparation; "Let a man examine himself," he says, "and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor. xi. 28). But as every holy examination must be made according to the rule of Holy Scripture, so it is in the case of this which Paul requires. Let us consider then, first of all, our human weakness and imperfection. What is man? Naught but dust and ashes (Gen. xviii. 27); of the earth we are born, from the earth we derive our sustenance, to the earth we shall return again. What is man? A foul seed, a mass of corruption, and by and by to be the food of worms. Man is born to labor, not to honor; "man that is born of a woman," and on that account with guilt, "is of few days" (Job xiv. 1); his life is passed in fear, filled as it is with many miseries, and hence with weeping; truly with many miseries, because both his body and his soul are so sorely afflicted. Man is ignorant alike of his origin and of his end. Our life is like a summer plant, soon withered, and yet this brief life is filled with labors and pains that are by no means brief.

Let us consider, in the second place, our unworthiness. Every creature, indeed, compared with the

Creator is a shadow, a sleep, a nothing (Ps. xxxix. 7), and no less so is man. But man is unworthy in very many and more grievous ways, for by his sins he has offended his Creator. God is by nature and essence just; hence in His nature and essence He is righteously offended at sin. And what are we but as stubble for this consuming fire? How can our abominable wickedness stand in His sight? How can our iniquities, which Thou hast set before Thee (Ps. xc. 8), and our errors, which Thou hast set in the light of Thy countenance, endure the blaze of Thy holiness? God is infinite and always acts consistently with His own character; His justice and His holy wrath against sin are alike infinite; and if He is great and truly marvelous in all His works, certainly is He also in wrath, in justice, in vengeance. Will He who spared not His own Son, spare the work of His hands? Will He who spared not His most holy Son, spare a worthless and insignificant servant? So utterly hateful is sin to God that He punishes it even in those most dear to Him, as is manifest in the case of Lucifer, the chief of the fallen angels.

And in our preparation for this Holy Supper, let us not simply examine ourselves, but let us also consider this blessed bread, which is the communion of the body of Christ, and then will it appear to us as a true fountain of God's grace, and an inexhaustible spring of divine mercy. Truly the

Lord could not turn away His face from us, whom He hath graciously made partakers of His own flesh, for who ever yet hated his own flesh (Eph. v. 29)? Thus this Holy Supper will transform our souls; this most divine sacrament will make us divine men, until finally we shall enter upon the fulness of the blessedness that is to come, filled with all the fulness of God, and wholly like Him. What we have here only by faith and in a mystery, there we shall enjoy in reality and openly. These bodies of ours which are now the temples of the Holy Spirit, and are sanctified and quickened by the body and blood of Christ dwelling in them, shall be crowned with this glory that in them we shall see God face to face (1 Cor xiii. 12). This holy remedy heals all the gaping wounds that sin hath made; this life-giving body of the Son of God overcomes every deadly sin; this is the sacred seal of the divine promises, which by God's grace we may exhibit at the great judgment; in the sure and sufficient pledge of eternal life thus given to us do we glory. If the body and blood of Christ are thus communicated to us, certainly we shall enjoy all the blessings acquired through that most holy body and that blessed blood. How will He who hath given us the greater blessings deny us the lesser? He that spared not His own Son, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things (Rom. viii. 32)?

Rejoice thou, O my soul, thou espoused bride of Christ, for the time is fast drawing near that thou shalt be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7); put on thy precious robes; take thou the wedding garment provided for thee, lest when He come in He find thee unprepared to receive Him. That robe is the righteousness of thy spouse, Jesus Christ, which we put on in holy baptism; our own righteousness is so far from being the wedding garment that it is nothing less than filthy rags before God (Is. lxiv. 6). O let us greatly fear to come to that solemn marriage supper of the Lamb clad in the miserable and filthy garments of our own works; but clothe Thou us, O Lord, lest in that day we be found naked (2 Cor. v. 3).

MEDITATION XXI.

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

To Ascend with Christ is our Blessed Privilege.

MEDITATE, O faithful soul, upon the ascension of thy Lord. Christ withdrew His visible bodily presence from us that faith in Him might have more abundant exercise ; for blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed (John xx. 29). Where our treasure is there will our heart be also (Luke xii. 34). Christ, our treasure, is in heaven ; let us then set our affections upon heavenly things, or meditate upon those things that are above (Col. iii. 2). The expectant bride awaits the coming of her spouse with the most ardent longings ; so let the devout soul ever longingly await the coming of that day when she shall be admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7). Let her confidently rest in the pledge of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord, when He ascended to heaven, sent as the Comforter ; let her trust in the merits of the body and blood of her Lord, which she receives in the Holy Supper, and let her firmly

believe that our bodies, nourished with this heavenly food, shall some day rise again from the dead. What we now believe we then shall see; what we now hope for we then shall enjoy in glad reality. As we journey here, as pilgrims, the Lord is present with us, but in another and invisible form (Luke xxiv. 15); in our home in the heavenly fatherland above we shall know Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Our Saviour chose to ascend to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts i. 12); the olive branch is the emblem of peace and joy; it was fitting, therefore, that He who through His bitter passion brings peace to terrified and troubled consciences, and is received into the skies with most jubilant joy by the heavenly hosts, should ascend from the mount called the Mount of Olives. That sacred mount impressively calls us to heavenly things; let us heed the call and follow on with holy desires, since we may not follow with bodily feet. Moses in like manner went up into a mountain to speak with the Lord (Ex. xix. 3); in a mountain the holy patriarchs of old worshipped the Lord (John iv. 20); Abraham chose the mountainous district, while Lot chose the plain of Jordan (Gen. xiii. 11). Let the faithful soul forsake the low-lying plains of this world, and seek with holy devotion those heavenly heights; thus shall she enjoy the most blessed communion with God; thus shall she be able to worship God in spirit and in

truth (John iv. 24), thus shall she with faithful Abraham escape the eternal burnings that shall overtake the plains of worldliness.

Bethany signifies the village of humility and affliction, through which the way to the heavenly kingdom lies open to us, just as Christ through the severest sufferings entered into His glory (Luke xxiv. 56). Hitherto heaven seemed to be closed to our souls, and the Paradise above guarded with a flaming sword (Gen. iii. 24); but now our triumphant Lord throws wide open the gates of heaven to us, that He may lead us back into our heavenly fatherland, from which by our sins we were excluded. The enraptured disciples stand gazing up into heaven (Acts i. 11); so let all true disciples of the Christ lift up their souls to the contemplation of things heavenly and divine.

O blessed Lord Jesus, how gloriously Thy passion hath ended! What a blessed and sudden transformation is here! Ah, in what awful anguish I saw Thee upon Mount Calvary, and now in what glory I behold Thee upon Mount Olivet! There Thou didst suffer alone; here Thou art attended by a vast multitude of the angelic hosts; there Thou didst ascend to the cross, here Thou dost ascend in a cloud to heaven; there Thou wast crucified between two thieves, here Thou dost exult among angelic choirs; there Thou wast nailed to the cross as a condemned criminal, here,

free from all condemnation, Thou art the deliverer of those condemned to eternal death ; there Thou didst bleed and die, here Thou dost rejoice and triumph.

Christ is our glorious head ; we are the members of His body ; rejoice thou and shout for joy, O faithful soul, in the ascension to heaven of thy Head. The glory of the head is the glory also of the members. Where our flesh reigns there let us believe that we too shall reign. Where our blood rules there let us hope that we too shall be glorious ; though our sins would forbid this, yet our participation in His holy nature makes it possible. Where the head is there shall also the other members of the body be ; Christ, our Head, hath gone into the heavens, hence the other members of the body with good reason hope to enter heaven, and not only so, but even now already have a possession in heaven. Christ came from heaven for our redemption ; He returns thither for our glorification. He was born in the flesh for us, He suffered for us, and therefore He ascended for us. The passion of Christ wins our love ; the resurrection of Christ strengthens our faith ; the ascension of Christ confirms our hope.

We ought, however, to follow our heavenly Bridegroom not only in ardent desires, but also in good works. Into the celestial city shall enter nothing that defileth (Rev. xxi. 27), in token of

which angels appeared at Christ's ascension (Acts i. 10) as coming from the heavenly Jerusalem, and clothed in white apparel, as tokens of innocence and purity. Pride cannot ascend to heaven with the great Master of humility ; nor evil with the Author of all goodness ; nor discord with the Prince of peace ; nor lust and wantonness with the Son of the Virgin ; nor vice with the Parent of all virtue ; nor sin with the Holy One, nor our sinful infirmities with the Great Physician. Does any one desire to behold God in the future life ; let him live worthily in the sight of God in this life. Does any one hope for the blessedness of heaven by and by ; let him love not the world now. O blessed Lord Jesus, draw our hearts after Thee, we beseech Thee.

MEDITATION XXII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

God seals His elect with His Holy Spirit.

AFTER our Lord had ascended to heaven, and entered into His glory, He sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 1). Under the old economy, when God delivered the law on Mount Sinai, He descended from heaven and appeared to His servant Moses; so when the gospel was to be preached in all the world by the apostles, the Holy Spirit descended upon the waiting apostles. There on Sinai there were “thunders and lightnings, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud” (Ex. xix. 16), because the law thunders against our disobedience, and convicts us of sin and as under the blazing wrath of God; but here on Pentecost is a sound as of a gently murmuring wind, for the reason that the proclamation of the gospel brings good cheer to our terrified minds. There alarm and terror seized all the people, because the law worketh wrath (Rom. iv. 15); but here the whole multitude came together to hear

the wonderful things of God, because the gospel reveals to men the way of approach to God. On Sinai Jehovah descended in fire, but in the fire of holy wrath and indignation against sin, and the whole mountain quaked greatly, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace (Ex. xix. 18); but here on the Day of Pentecost Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, also descends in fire, but in the fire of love and holy affection, so that the house where the disciples were sitting (Acts ii. 2) is not shaken with any manifestation of the divine wrath, but the whole house is filled with the manifested glory of the Holy Spirit. What wonder is it that the Holy Spirit is sent from heaven to sanctify us, when the Son of God had already been sent to redeem us? All the bitter suffering of Christ would have been of no avail, if the glad tidings of the gospel were not made known to the world; for of what advantage is a hidden treasure? Thus our most merciful heavenly Father has not only prepared a great benefit in the passion of His Son, Jesus Christ, but also desired to offer to the whole world, and make effective, that grace by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Our faithful God withholds nothing from us, but sends both His Son and His Spirit to provide for the salvation of us miserable sinners.

The Holy Spirit, moreover, descended upon the apostles while they were continuing with one accord in prayer (Acts i. 14); for the Spirit of prayer

is prevailed upon by prayer, and He it is who leads us to pray. And wherefore? Because He is the bond that unites our hearts to God, just as He unites the Son with the Father, and the Father with the Son; for He is the mutual essential love between the Father and the Son. This spiritual union between God and our souls follows upon faith; but faith, the gift of the Spirit, is obtained by prayer, and true prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit. When incense was offered to the Lord, at the dedication of Solomon's temple, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (1 Kings viii. 11); thus if thou dost offer unto God the incense of prayer and supplication, the Holy Spirit will fill with His glory the temple of thy heart. Oh, let us admire the mercy and the grace of our God! God the Father promises to hear us when we pray (Ps. 1. 15); God the Son Himself maketh intercession for us (Rom. viii. 34); and God the Holy Spirit indites our prayers, and prays in us (Gal. iv. 6). Holy angels carry our prayers to God; and thus every avenue to the throne of heavenly grace is open to our prayers. The merciful God gives us the disposition to pray, because He bestows upon us the spirit of grace and of prayer; He also makes our prayers effectual, because He always hears them, and answers them; if not according to our desire, yet according to our need.

The Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples,

when they were all gathered together with one accord in one place; without doubt then He is the Spirit of love and of concord. He unites us to Christ through faith; He makes God one with us through love; He joins us to our neighbor in Christian affection. The devil is the author of discord; he makes a gulf between us and God by sin, and by hatred, contention and strife causes unhappy divisions among men. But as the Holy Spirit united the divine and human natures in Christ by His own overshadowing power (Luke i. 35), so also by the outpouring of His gracious gifts upon us He unites us to God and God to us. As long as the Holy Spirit abides in a man, filling him with His gracious gifts, so long does that man abide in a holy union with God. And just as soon as a man through sin falls away from faith and love, and banishes the Holy Spirit from his heart, he is alienated from God, and the blessed union between God and his soul is destroyed. He who hath the Holy Spirit hateth not his brother, and why? Because by the Holy Spirit he is made a partaker of the mystical body of Christ, whose members include all godly souls; but who ever yet hated the members of his own body (Eph. v. 29)? Nay more, he who is ruled by the Spirit of God will even love his enemies; because he "who is joined unto the Lord is made one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). God maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good

(Matt. v. 45), and hateth nothing that He hath made. He who has the Spirit of God is ready to serve all who need his help; he does good to all men, as far as in him lies; he spends himself for the good of others, and all this because God is the fountain of all compassion and grace towards all men. Now the Holy Spirit excites His own peculiar impulses and emotions in men; just as the soul makes the body living, sentient, active, so the Spirit makes a man spiritual. He fills our minds with heavenly delights, and directs the whole man in rendering obedience to God, and in his duty to his fellow-man.

That sound, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, came from heaven, because the Holy Spirit is heavenly in His nature, being of the same essence with the Father and the Son, and proceeding, from all eternity, from the Father and the Son. He it is who leads us to think upon heavenly things and to seek those things that are above; he who sets his affections upon the world and worldly things has not yet been made a partaker of the heavenly Spirit. The Holy Spirit came under the emblem of a breath of air, because He imparts living consolation to afflicted souls, and because by an alternate inspiration and expiration, or a breath of air, we sustain this present bodily life. So He came under the emblem of a breath, and of a breathing, who alone gives us the power to

live the spiritual life. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John iii. 8). It was appropriate that He should come like unto wind, since He proceeds from the Father and the Son by an eternal breath. The sound came as of a rushing mighty wind, figuring thus the power of the Holy Spirit's gracious work in our hearts. This Holy Spirit impels the godly to every good work (Rom. viii. 14), and so influences and controls them that they regard not the tyrant's threats, nor Satan's snares, nor the world's hatred. He confers upon the apostles the gift of tongues, because their sound is to go out into all the earth (Ps. xix. 4), and thus the confusion of tongues (Gen. xi. 7), inflicted as a punishment upon the proud and rash builders of the tower of Babel, was removed, and the natives of the earth, scattered and separated through diversity of language, are brought together in the unity of the faith through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Fitly did He come under the figure of tongues, moved by whom holy men of God spake in old time (2 Peter i. 21), who spake through the holy apostles, and who now puts the word of God into the mouth of the ministers of the Church.

For so many and so great gifts, let the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son be praised and magnified forever and ever.

MEDITATION XXIII.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHURCH.

The Church is Christ's Bride.

CONSIDER, O devout soul, how greatly God hath loved thee in calling thee into the fellowship of His Church. "My beloved is one" says the Bridegroom in Canticles vi. 1; truly one, seeing that there is but one true and orthodox Church, the beloved bride of Christ. Out of the body of Christ, or the Church, we may not look for the Spirit of Christ. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9), and he who is not Christ's cannot be a partaker of eternal life. All those who were not admitted into Noah's ark perished miserably in the flood (Gen. vii. 21); and so all outside the spiritual ark of the Church are involved in eternal destruction. No man will have God for his father in heaven who refuses to have the Church for his mother upon the earth. Just think, O devout soul, of the many thousands who go down to hell every day, for the reason that they are outside the bosom of the Church; and it

is not thy nature, but only the grace of a merciful God, that makes thee different from them. When Egypt lay in thick darkness, there was light only among the Israelites (Ex. x. 23); so it is that only in the Church do we have the light of the knowledge of God. Those who live without the Church pass, from the dense shades of ignorance in the present life, into the darkness of eternal condemnation in the life that is to come. He who has no portion in the Church militant upon earth shall never share in the glories of the Church triumphant above; for there is the closest union between these: God, the Word, faith, Christ, the Church, and life eternal.

The holy Church of God sustains the relations of mother, virgin, bride. She is as a mother because she daily bears spiritual sons to God. She is as a chaste virgin, because she keeps herself pure from all unholy alliances with the devil and the world. She is a bride, because Christ hath betrothed her to Himself by an eternal covenant, and hath given to her the pledge of the Spirit. The Church is that ship which carries Christ and His disciples (Matt. viii. 23), and which will bear us finally into the haven of eternal blessedness; the Church thus sails in a blessed course over the sea of this world, furnished with faith as a rudder, having God for her pilot, angels for her oarsmen, and all the company of the godly for her passen-

gers; on her deck is erected the cross of our salvation as her mast, upon which are suspended the sails of evangelical faith, and with these filled with the breezes of the Holy Spirit she is conducted to the haven of eternal rest. The Church is that vine which God hath planted in the field of this world, (Matt. xxi. 33; Is. v. 2); which He hath watered with His own blood, which he hath hedged round about with the protecting influences of holy angels, in which He hath digged the wine-press of His own bitter passion, from which He hath removed the stones (Is. v. 2) and whatsoever might offend. The Church is that woman clothed with the sun (Rev. xii. 1), because she is arrayed in the righteousness of Christ; she treads the moon under her feet, because she looks down upon earthly things as subject to various change and decay.

Contemplate, O devout soul, the exalted dignity of the Church, and render due thanks therefor to Almighty God. Great indeed are the benefits which God bestows upon us in and through the Church, but these are not open to us all; in a sense it is as a garden enclosed, as a fountain sealed (Canticles iv. 12); no one may behold the beauty of such an enclosed garden without entering it, so no one can know of the blessings that God gives through His Church, except those who are actually in it. This bride of Christ is black without but comely within (Cant. i. 5); for the

King's daughter is all glorious within (Ps. xlv. 13). This ship is tossed about with various tempests of persecution (Matt. viii. 24); this vine is sustained in an upright position by being bound to supports, and it is pruned that it may bring forth more fruit (John xv. 2); and for this woman the infernal dragon himself lies in wait with hellish snares (Rev. xii. 3). Beautiful as a lily is the Church, but it is as a lily among thorns (Cant. ii. 12). A most beautiful garden is the Church, but when the keen blasts of tribulation blow through it, then only do its precious spices flow out. The Church is the daughter of God, but she is greatly despised by the world; she looks forward expectantly to a heavenly inheritance, and for this reason she wanders as a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth; in her wanderings she is oppressed, and yet in her oppression she is silent, and in her silence is brave, and by her bravery she overcomes all her enemies. The Church is our spiritual mother, and yet like Mary, the mother of Christ, she must stand weeping at the cross of the Saviour (John xix. 25). The Church is like a palm tree, in that the heavier her burden of tribulations and temptations the more she grows.

Meditate, O devout soul, upon the worthiness of the Church, and take heed lest thou do anything unworthy of her. The Church is thy spiritual mother; take care that thou despise not her voice

as she speaks to thee. She is thy mother, and through word and sacraments thou oughtest draw all thy spiritual nourishment from her. The church is as a chaste virgin; if thou then wouldest be true to her, abstain from the embraces of the world; thou belongest to her, see then that thou dishonor not thyself nor her by any unholy alliances with the devil. The Church is the bride of Christ, and so is every godly soul; let it take heed then not to cling to Satan in an unholy union. Thou, O my soul, art the bride of Christ; see to it that thou lose not the earnest of the Holy Spirit which hath been given unto thee; thou art the bride of Christ, pray unceasingly, that thy heavenly Bridegroom may hasten to lead thee unto the marriage feast above. Thy Bridegroom may come in the quiet and security of the midnight hour (Matt. xxv. 6); watch therefore, that when He cometh He may not find thee sleeping, and shut the door of eternal salvation upon thee. Let thy lamp be filled with the oil of faith and be brightly burning, lest at the coming of thy heavenly Spouse thou shouldst seek in vain for oil for thy lamp (Matt. xxv. 10).

Thou art borne in the Church as in a ship; O, take heed lest thou cast thyself into the raging sea of the world, before ever thou comest into the heavenly port. O pray earnestly that thou mayst not be engulfed by storms of affliction and waves of temptation.

Thou art called into the vineyard of thy Lord (Matt. xx. 1), O, labor earnestly, faithfully; let the thought of the reward at the close of the day lighten all thy toil. Thou, O my soul, art a vine of thy Lord's own planting; cast away from thee then all useless branches, all the fruitless works of the flesh, and look upon the whole course of thy life here upon earth as a time for pruning to make thee more fruitful. Thou art a branch in the true vine, Christ Jesus (John xv. 1); O, see to it, that thou abidest in Christ and bearest much fruit, for the heavenly husbandman taketh away the branch that beareth not fruit, and purgeth the branch that beareth fruit, that it may bring forth more fruit (John xv. 2). Thou hast put on Christ through faith (Gal. iii. 27), and art clothed with this Sun of righteousness (Mal. iv. 2); see to it, then, that thou trample under thy feet the moon (Rev. xii. 1), that is, all things that are earthly in their nature, and that thou esteemest these of little value in comparison with the eternal comforts of heaven.

O blessed Jesus, who hast led us into Thy church militant upon earth, bring us, at last, in Thy mercy, into Thy church triumphant in heaven!

MEDITATION XXIV.

PREDESTINATION.

We are Chosen in Christ.

O DEVOUT soul, as often as thou wouldest meditate upon thy predestination, look up to Christ hanging upon the cross, dying there for the sins of the whole world, and rising again for our justification (Rom. iv. 25). Let thy meditation begin with the infant Redeemer as He lay in the manger, and so let it proceed in regular order to the end.

God hath chosen us before the foundation of the world (Eph. i. 4), but that choice was made in Christ; if therefore thou art in Christ by faith, doubt not that this election of grace pertains to thee also; if thou art clinging to Christ with firm and assured confidence of heart, let no doubts distress thee as to thy being included in the number of the elect. But if passing beyond the limits of the word of God, thou desirest to pry into the profound mystery of predestination *a priori*, or by the light of reason alone, it is to be greatly feared that thou wilt fall into the depths of despair. Out of

Christ God is a consuming fire (Deut. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29); take heed, therefore, lest thou presumptuously approach too near this fire and be consumed. Without the satisfaction rendered by Christ as our Saviour, God accuses us all by the words of the law, aye, condemns us all; take good heed then that thou seekest not to solve the mystery of thy predestination from the law. Seek not to fathom all the reasons of the divine counsels, nor to penetrate all the secret counsels of the Most High, lest thy thoughts lead thee far away from God. "God dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16); presume not then to approach Him rashly and without due humility.

And yet God hath revealed Himself most graciously to us in the light of the gospel; in this light thou mayst safely inquire concerning the mystery of thy election, and in this light thou wilt see the true light (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

Leave then the consideration of the profound mysteries of that eternal decree, made from all eternity, and turn thy thought to the clear manifestations of God's will and purpose concerning thee, made in time through Christ; our justification in Christ, made in time, is a mirror, or clear exhibition to us, of God's purpose of election made without time. See from the law how justly God's wrath is expressed against thy sins, and repent thereof; see from the gospel how graciously God's

mercy is extended to thee because of Christ's merit, and by faith make it thine own; comprehend the true nature of faith and exhibit it in thy godly conversation; recognize in thy cross the fatherly chastisements of God, and bear it with patience; and then, at length, thou mayst begin to discuss the doctrine of predestination. The apostle pursues this method; let the true disciple of the apostle follow it also.

In respect of this mystery three things are always to be observed: the mercy of God who loves us, the merit of Christ who suffers for us, and the grace of the Holy Spirit who calls us through the gospel. The mercy of God is all-embracing, because He loved the whole world; "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. xxxiii. 5), aye, it is greater than heaven and earth, it is infinite as God is, because God is love (1 John iv. 16). He solemnly declares in His own word that He has no pleasure in the death of any one (Ez. xxxiii. 11); as if this were not enough, He confirmed it with an oath; if thou canst not believe when God promises, at least believe Him when He makes a solemn oath concerning thy salvation. God is called "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. i. 3) because it is of His very nature to be merciful and to pardon—His property of showing mercy He derives from Himself—it is His own nature; but His property of judging and taking vengeance He seems to derive

from another—it seems to be foreign to His nature, so much more disposed does He seem to be to show mercy than vengeance.

The merit of Christ is also universal, because He suffered for the sins of the whole world (1 John ii. 2). What can demonstrate more clearly the mercy of God towards us than that He loved us before we had any being, because it was solely of His love that we were created? He loved us even when we were His enemies, since it was simply because of His love that He gave His Son to redeem us. To the sinner condemned to eternal torment, and utterly unable to redeem himself, God says, "Here is my only-begotten Son; take Him and offer Him for thy ransom." The Son Himself says, "Here am I; take me, crucify me, and redeem thyself." Christ is the flower of the open plain, not of the enclosed garden, because the odor of His grace is not limited to a few but freely belongs to all; and that thou mightest have no doubt that His merit is for all, Christ mercifully prayed, in the hour of His death, for the very men who were crucifying Him (Luke xxiii. 34), and shed His own blood for those who were then really shedding His blood. The promises of the gospel are also universal, for Christ says to all, "Come unto me *all* ye that labor" (Matt. xi. 28). What was performed and provided for all is freely offered to all; and of all those things which thy Saviour hath accomplished

for thee by His redemption, and now offers thee, thou mayest enjoy just as much as thy faith will accept. God denies the blessing of His grace to none but those who deem themselves unworthy of it, and thus refuse it.

Consider then, O faithful soul, these three supports of the fact of thine election, and upon them rest with a firm and hearty confidence; consider the tender mercy of thy God exhibited to thee in the past, and doubt not concerning its continuance to the end.

When as yet thou hadst no being, God created thee; when through Adam's fall thou wast condemned to eternal death, He redeemed thee; when out of the Church thou didst live in the world; He called thee; when thou wast ignorant, He instructed thee; when thou didst wander away, He led thee back again; when thou didst sin, He corrected thee; when thou stoodest, He held thee fast; when thou didst fall down, He raised thee up again; when thou didst go forward, He led thee; when thou camest to Him, He received thee; in all this He showed His long-suffering in waiting for thee and His readiness to pardon thee. The mercy of God goeth before thee; hope firmly that it will also follow thee (Ps. xxiii. 6); the mercy of God anticipates thee to heal thee of the malady of sin, it will follow thee also to glorify thee; it anticipates thee that thou mayst be enabled

to live a godly life, it will follow thee that thou mayest live with Him forever. Why art thou not crushed when thou fallest? Who puts His hand under thee to stay thee? Who, but the Lord? Trust then in the mercy of thy God in the future, and firmly hope for the end of thy faith, even the salvation of thy soul (1 Pet. i. 9). In whose hands canst thou more securely and confidently rest the matter of thy salvation, than in those which formed the heavens and the earth (Is. lxvi. 2), in those which are never shortened that they cannot save (Is. lix. 1), in those from which flow forth streams of compassion, nor are ever wanting in courses through which to flow?

Consider then, O devout soul, that we are chosen of God, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. i. 4); the blessings of election belong not to those, therefore, who desire not, and strive not for, a holy life. We are chosen in Christ (Eph. i. 4). We are *in* Christ by faith, and faith worketh by love (Gal. v. 6); where therefore love is absent faith cannot be present; and where faith is absent Christ cannot be; where Christ is absent there is no election. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). No one shall ever pluck Christ's sheep out of His hands (John x. 28), but

then Christ's sheep hear His voice (John x. 27). We are the house of God (Heb. iii. 6), but let us "hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." O Lord, do Thou, who hast given me to will, give me power also to perform. (Phil. ii. 13).

MEDITATION XXV.

THE SAVING EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

Our Sighs Pierce the Heavens.

IT is a mark of great favor on the part of God that He desires the godly to approach Him in prayer in the spirit of familiar friendship. He gives us the disposition to pray, and likewise makes our prayers effectual. Great indeed is the power of prayer, which though it be offered upon the earth is effectual in heaven. The prayer of a righteous man is the key to the treasury of heaven; the request ascends to heaven, and the answer of pardon and peace descends from God. Prayer is as a shield of safety to the believer, quenching all the darts of the adversary (Eph. vi. 16). When Moses held up his hands Israel prevailed against the Amalekites (Ex. xvii. 11); and if thou hold up thy hands toward heaven in prayer, Satan shall not prevail against thee. As a massive wall resists and opposes the advance of an enemy, so is the holy wrath of God averted by the prayers of His saints. Our Saviour Himself prayed, not for the supply of

His own necessities, but to teach us the worth and dignity of prayer. Prayer is a mark of our subjection, because God bids us offer prayers to Him daily as a sort of spiritual tribute to Him. It is a ladder by which we ascend to heaven, for prayer is nothing else than a drawing near of the mind to God. It is a shield of defence, because the soul that liveth daily in a spirit of prayer is secure from the insults of devils. Prayer is a faithful messenger we send to the throne of God, to call Him to our aid in the time of need. This messenger is never frustrated in His embassy, for God always hears us when we pray, if not according to our desires, yet according to our profit and salvation. We may without doubt or peradventure hope for one of two things; either that God will give us just what we ask for, or that He will grant us that which He knows is more profitable for us. God, unasked, hath given us the most excellent gift He had to bestow, even His own Son; what then will He not give us when we supplicate His throne? We must not doubt either God's readiness to hear our prayers, nor our Saviour's active intercession in our behalf. Under any circumstances whatever, thou mayest, with Moses, enter the tabernacle to take counsel with the Lord in prayer, and quickly wilt thou hear the divine response. When Christ prayed He was transfigured; and so prayer transforms and transfigures our souls; for prayer is as a light to the soul, which very fre-

quently leaves him exulting with joy, whom it found cast down with despondency.

How canst thou look upon the sun unless thou hast first adored Him who gives thee its beneficent light? How canst thou enjoy the bounties of thy table unless thou hast first given thanks to Him who so abundantly supplies the good things of life? With what hope canst thou resign thyself to the slumbers of the night if thou hast not first fortified thyself with prayer? What fruit canst thou expect from thy labors if thou dost not first invoke the blessing of God upon them, without whom all labor must be fruitless? If, therefore, thou desirest spiritual or temporal gifts, ask, and thou shalt receive (Matt. vii. 7). If thou desirest Christ, seek Him in prayer and thou shalt find Him. If thou desirest the door of divine grace and eternal salvation opened, knock through prayer, and it shall be opened to thee. If in thy pilgrimage through this wilderness world thou art afflicted with spiritual thirst through temptation and a lack of spiritual blessings, come thou in thy devotions to the spiritual rock, that is, Christ, and strike it with the rod of prayer, and streams of divine grace shall flow forth to quench thy thirst and supply thy need. Dost thou wish to offer a pleasing sacrifice to God? Offer prayer. The Lord will perceive the sweet odor of thy sacrifice and His wrath shall abate. Wouldst thou hold constant intercourse with God?

Take delight in prayer, for this is spiritual conversation between God and the devout soul. Wouldst thou taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. xxxiv. 9)? Then constrain the Lord by prayer to take up His abode in thy heart.

Prayer is pleasing to God, but only when offered in His appointed way. If, therefore, thou wouldst be heard in prayer, pray wisely, ardently, humbly, faithfully, perseveringly and confidently. Pray wisely, that is, for those things that may be for the glory of God and the salvation of thy fellow-men. God is almighty, do not strive therefore in thy prayer to limit or restrict His power; He is all-wise, do not then prescribe any set order in which thy prayer should be answered. Be not rash or presumptuous in thy prayers, but let them issue from a heart full of faith. Faith, however, hath due regard to the Divine Word. What God promises absolutely in His Word, that thou mayest pray for absolutely; what He promises conditionally, as, for example, temporal blessings, those likewise thou shouldst ask for conditionally; what He has in no way promised thou shouldst in no way pray for. Often God gives us in holy wrath what He denies us in mercy. Therefore follow the example of Christ, who fully yields His own will to God (Matt. xxvi. 39). Pray ardently; for how canst thou ask God to hear thee, when thou dost not hear thyself? Wouldst thou have God mindful of thee when thou

art not mindful of thyself? When thou wouldest pray, enter thy closet and close the door (Matt. vi. 6). Thy heart is that closet, into which thou shouldest enter if thou wouldest rightly pray. Thou must close the door that the distracting thoughts of worldly affairs enter not in to disturb thee. There are no voices that will reach the ears of God but the deep emotions of the soul; the mind ought to be so stirred by the ardor of our meditations, that it will far exceed what the tongue expresses; this is to pray in spirit and in truth (John iv. 23) as our Lord requires. Christ prayed on a mountain (Luke vi. 12), and lifted up His eyes to heaven (John xvii. 1), and so ought we to turn our minds away from all creatures and direct them to God. Thou doest God an injury if thou prayest Him to have regard to thee when thou hast none to thyself. We can pray without ceasing (1 Thess. v. 17) if we pray in the spirit, so that at least our mind is always watchful towards God in holy desires. It is not needful that we should supplicate God with loud cries, because as He dwells in the hearts of the godly He hears the very sighs of our hearts. Nor need we multiply words in our prayers, for He knoweth our thoughts. Sometimes a single groan under the impulse of the Spirit of God and offered up in the power of that Spirit is more pleasing to God than a long and tedious repetition of prayers, where the tongue speaks but the heart is altogether silent.

Pray humbly, trusting not in thine own merit, but only in the grace of God. If our prayers are offered in reliance upon our own worthiness, they are condemned in God's sight, although in the ardor of devotion our hearts might sweat blood. No one can do that which is pleasing to God except in Christ; and no one can pray acceptably but in the name of Christ and relying upon His merit. No sacrifices were acceptable to God but those offered on the altar of God's appointed tabernacle alone (Deut. xii. 5); and no prayer can be offered acceptably to God but on that altar of His appointment, Christ Jesus. The Lord promised to hear the prayers of Israel if they prayed with their faces turned toward Jerusalem (1 Kings viii. 44). So in our prayers let us turn ourselves towards Christ, who is indeed the temple of the Godhead (John ii. 19, 21). When Christ prayed in Gethsemane He cast Himself down upon the ground (Mark xiv. 35); behold how that most holy soul humbles Himself in the presence of the divine majesty!

Pray faithfully, so that thou mayest rightly bear the deprivation of every joy, and patiently endure every chastisement; the sooner we pray the better for us; the more frequently we offer up our devotions the more profitable will it be; the more fervently we approach God the more acceptable shall our prayers be to Him.

Pray perseveringly; because when God delays

the answer He is not always denying us, but simply commanding His gifts; and those gifts that we have desired for a long time we relish more keenly when we obtain them. Pray confidently; asking truly in faith, nothing wavering.

O most merciful, indulgent God, who hast bidden us come to Thee in prayer, help us to pray acceptably unto Thee.

MEDITATION XXVI.

THE GUARDIANSHIP OF ANGELS.

Saints have their guardian angels.

CONSIDER, O devout soul, the grace of thy God in giving His angels charge concerning thee! Our heavenly Father sent His Son into the world to deliver us from our sins; the Son of God Himself became incarnate for our salvation; the Holy Spirit is sent to sanctify us; angels are despatched from heaven to protect us; thus the whole assembly of heaven is employed to serve us, and to make their blessings ours. I no longer wonder that all the inferior creatures of earth are formed for man, since even the angels of heaven, so much more exalted than we, deny us not their gentle ministries. What wonder that the heavens give us light by day that we may labor, and darkness by night that we may rest, since the dwellers in that heavenly kingdom are busy in holy services to us? What wonder is it that the air furnishes us with the breath of life, and all sorts of fowls for our indulgence, when those heavenly spirits watch over us to preserve our

lives from harm? What wonder that the water should quench our thirst, cleanse away filth, refresh the arid land, and teem with various kinds of fish for us, when the holy angels themselves stand by us to refresh and comfort us when we are wearied with the hot breath of troubles and temptation? What wonder that the earth gives thee an abode, and for thy nourishment furnishes thy table with all kinds of creature comforts, when He giveth His angels charge over thee "to keep thee in all thy ways, to bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Psalm xci. 11, 12)?

The angels were deeply interested in the early life of Christ; an angel announced His conception (Luke i. 31); an angel joyfully heralds His birth (Luke ii. 9-11); an angel gives command for the flight into Egypt (Matt. ii. 13); angels minister to Him in the wilderness (Matt. iv. 11); angels wait upon Him during all His earthly ministry; an angel is present with Him in the awful agony of death (Luke xxii. 46); an angel appears at His resurrection (Matt. xxviii. 25); angels were present at His glorious ascension (Acts i. 10), and angels will accompany Him when He returns to judgment (Matt. xxv. 31). As therefore angels ministered to Christ in the days of His flesh, so likewise are they deeply interested in all those who through faith are incorporated into Christ; as they minis-

tered to the glorious Head, in the same manner shall they minister to the members of the body of Christ. They joyfully serve upon the earth those whom they shall have by and by as companions in heaven; nor refuse their holy ministries to those whose delightful fellowship they hope to enjoy after awhile.

As Jacob went on his way to his native land, the angels of God met him (Gen. xxxii. 1); so angelic guards attend the righteous in this life, which is the pathway to their heavenly fatherland. Angels appear to protect Daniel among the lions (Dan. vi. 22); so they ever stand ready to protect the godly from the snares of the lion of hell. Angels hasten the patriarch Lot from the destruction that was to overtake Sodom (Gen. xix. 15, 16); so by their holy inspirations, and their protecting influences against the temptations of the devil, they frequently snatch us, as from the very flames of the pit. Angels carry Lazarus into the bosom of Abraham (Luke xvi. 22); so do they bear the souls of all God's chosen ones to the glorious palace of the heavenly King. It was an angel that led the apostle Peter out of prison; and so our angel often delivers us from most distressing perils. Great indeed is the power of our adversary, the devil, but it cheers us to reflect that angel-guards attend us. Doubt not that in all thy dangers these heavenly helpers are near thee; for the Scriptures, under the

figure of Cherubim and Seraphim, represent them as winged, to assure us that in every time of peril they will with incredible swiftness bring us the needed aid. Doubt not that the guardian angels are present with thee in all places, for they are the purest spirits, unencumbered with material bodies; all visible things yield to them, and hither and thither at will they go unhindered. Nor needest thou doubt that these spirits know thy perils and afflictions, for they always behold the face of the heavenly Father (Matt. xviii. 10), and stand always ready most promptly to do His will.

Consider, O devout soul, that these angels are holy; strive then after holiness if thou wouldest enjoy their blessed fellowship. Similarity of character is especially favorable to friendship; accustom thyself to holy deeds if thou wouldest have their guardianship. Everywhere show due reverence to thine angel, and never do anything in his presence thou wouldest blush to do in the sight of men. These angelic spirits are chaste and pure, and therefore are driven away by impurity in thought and deed. As foul smoke drives away bees, so these angelic guardians of our lives are put to flight by foul and grievous sin; and having once lost their protecting power, how wilt thou be safe from the snares of the devil, or the various perils that may beset thee? If thy soul is left without this strong wall of angelic defence, then the devil will easily

storm it by his artful devices. These holy angels are sent forth as ministering spirits by God Himself (Heb. i. 14); hence thou must be reconciled to God through faith in Christ, if thou wouldest enjoy their guardianship. If thou hast not the grace of God in thine heart, thou needest not expect angels to guard thee. Let us look upon these angels as, in a sense, the serviceable hands of God, which move themselves to no purpose unless He direct them. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10); the tears of truly penitent sinners are as wine to the angels, while the hard and impenitent heart drives away these heavenly guardians. Let us then manifest penitence for our sins, that we may excite joy among the angels of God. Angels are of a heavenly and spiritual nature; therefore let us fix our thoughts upon those things that are heavenly and spiritual, that they may delight to dwell with us. The angels are marked by their humility, and pride is exceedingly hateful to those who disdain not to serve little children (Matt. xviii. 10); why then should we, who are but as dust and ashes, exhibit such pride, when a heavenly spirit humbles itself so greatly?

The cunning of the evil one is most to be feared in the hour of death, for it is written that the serpent shall bruise the heel (Gen. iii. 15); the last part of the body is the heel, the last part of life is

death. In the last agony of death will we stand most in need of the guardianship of angels, who shall deliver us from the fiery darts of the devil, and shall transport our souls, as they depart from the home of the body, to the heavenly paradisc. When Zacharias was executing the priest's office in the sacred courts of the temple, the angel of the Lord came to him (Luke i. 11); so if thou dost rejoice in the use of God's word, and in the exercise of thy devotions, thou, too, shalt rejoice in the blessed ministry of angels.

O most merciful God, who by the holy angels hast led us through this wilderness, grant that through them also we may be led into the glory of Thy heavenly kingdom.

MEDITATION XXVII.

THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.

Who knoweth the cunning of a demon?

CONSIDER, O devout soul, to what peril thou art constantly exposed from the devil, thine adversary. He is an enemy extremely ready in audacity, strong in resources, subtle in arts and devices, boundless in stratagem, unweariedly zealous in his assaults upon the soul, and capable of assuming any form at pleasure. He himself entices us to the commission of sin, and then takes delight in accusing us before God's tribunal. By turns he heaps up accusations against God among men, and against men to God, and against men among men. He first observes accurately the weaknesses and propensities of each individual, and then proposes his temptations in the manner that will most surely ensnare that soul. When besiegers storm a city, they do not direct their attack upon the strongly fortified parts, but where they think the walls are defective, the ditches more shallow and the towers unguarded ; and so the devil, waging a

ceaseless warfare against our souls, always assails us at our weakest and most unguarded points. Conquered once he does not cease his efforts, but bestirs himself to tempt us anew, that he may overcome, in a moment of weariness or negligence, those whom he could not conquer by the violence of his temptations. Whom will he not assail, since he dared to approach the Lord of Glory Himself with his cunning malignity (Matt. iv. 3)? If he sought to sift the very apostles of Christ as wheat (Luke xxii. 31), think you he will fail to test any Christian with temptation? He deceived Adam (Gen. iii. 1-5) who had a nature holy and innocent; whom can he not then deceive with natures fallen and sinful? He led astray Judas although in the school of the Saviour; whom can he not then lead astray in the world, the school of error?

In all circumstances and conditions of life we need to fear the wiles of the devil. In prosperity he puffs us up with pride; in adversity he sinks us into despair. If he sees any one given to parsimoniousness he takes delight in forging upon him the fetters of insatiable desire. If an heroic spirit animates any one, he inflames him with the sharp stings of passion. If he sees any one a little too joyous, he urges him on to an excessive desire for pleasure. Those whom he sees animated with fervid religious zeal, he endeavors to entangle in the snares of vain superstition. Men weighted

with worldly honors, he inflames with unholy ambition. When he would lead us into sin he magnifies the great mercy of God. When he has succeeded in leading us astray, he enlarges upon the rigorous justice of God. First he would lead us into presumptuous sin, and then attempt to drag us down into the depths of despair. Now he assails us externally by persecutions, and anon internally with fiery temptations. At times he attacks us openly and violently, and again secretly and cunningly. He tempts us to gluttony in eating, to deeds of shame and licentiousness, to laziness in our daily avocations, to envy in conversation, to avarice in office, to passion in the exercise of authority, to pride in wearing our honors. He fills our hearts with evil thoughts, our mouths with false words ; and leads our members to the commission of iniquitous deeds. In the day-time he impels us to evil works, and at night he suggests shameful dreams. So in all the situations and circumstances of life we must guard against the wiles of the devil. We sleep and he watches ; we are apparently secure, and he goeth about as a roaring lion (1 Pet. v. 8). If thou shouldst behold an enraged lion rushing upon thee how thou wouldst shudder with horrible fear ; and when thou hearest that this lion of hell is plotting against thee, thou dost slumber on in imagined security.

Consider, then, O faithful soul, the wiles of this

powerful adversary, and seek to overcome him only by the employment of spiritual weapons. Let your loins be girt about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. vi. 14). Put on as a garment the perfect righteousness of Christ, and thou wilt be safe from the devil's temptations. Hide thee in the cleft (Cant. ii. 14) of Christ's wounds, whenever thou art terrified by the fiery darts of that malignant power. The true believer abides in Christ; and as Satan has no power against Christ (John xiv. 30), so has he none against the true believer. Let thy feet be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (Eph. vi. 15). Let us be ever confessing Christ, our Saviour, and then no temptation of Satan shall harm us. An enchanter's words do not so quickly drive away a serpent, as a hearty and unceasing confession of Christ puts to flight the devil, that old serpent of hell. Let us also take the shield of faith (Eph. vi. 16) that we may therewith quench the fiery darts of this wicked enemy. It is faith which removes mountains, mountains namely of doubt, of persecution, of temptation. The Israelites, whose door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the paschal lamb, were not smitten by the destroying angel (Ex. xii. 13), and so those whose hearts are sprinkled, through faith, with the blood of Christ shall not be harmed by this fell destroyer. Faith rests in the promises of God, and these promises

Satan can never overthrow ; neither then can he prevail against our faith. Faith is the light of the soul ; and in that light the temptations of the evil spirit are easily apparent. Through faith our sins will be cast into the depths of the sea of Divine mercy (Micah vii. 19), and in that sea the fiery darts of the devil will be easily quenched. Let us also take the helmet of salvation, that is, we ought to be animated by a blessed hope. Endure temptations, considering the end that God has in view in our temptation ; for God directs us in our conflicts, and shall by and by crown the victor. If there be no enemy there will be no conflict ; if no conflict, no victory ; if no victory, no crown. Better far a stern conflict which brings us very near to God, than such a peace as will alienate us from God. We must take also the sword of the Spirit (Eph. vi. 17), which is the word of God. Let the consolations of God's word have more weight with thee than the contradictions of the devil; Christ overcame all the temptations of Satan with the word of God (Matt. iv. 4) ; and by that same divine word Christians may yet overcome all the temptations of the devil.

Finally, in prayer thou hast the greatest source of help against thy temptations. As the little vessel of thy soul is being overwhelmed with the waves of temptation (Matt. viii. 24), arouse Christ with thy prayers. Our visible foes we subdue by

striking and slaying them ; but this invisible enemy of our souls we conquer by pouring out our prayers to God.

O blessed Christ, do Thou fight for us and in us, that in Thee we may have the victory !

MEDITATION XXVIII.

GENERAL RULES FOR A GODLY LIFE.

A Godly Life is the Wisest Life.

EVERY day thou livest thou art approaching nearer and nearer to death, to the judgment, and to eternity. Consider, therefore, day by day, how thou shalt meet the hour of death, stand the severe test of the judgment, and live during all eternity. We must exercise diligent care respecting all our thoughts, our words, our deeds ; for we must render a strict account for all these in the day of judgment (Matt. xii. 36). Consider every evening that death may overtake thee this night ; and let thy thought be every morning that death may come to thee this day. Put not off conversion and the exercise of good works until to-morrow, for it is not certain that thou shalt see to-morrow, but death is certain, and it is always threatening thee. Nothing is more fatal to godliness than procrastination. If thou continuest to despise the inward call of the Holy Spirit, thou wilt never be truly converted. Delay not conversion and good works

until old age ; but offer to God the power and the bloom of thy youth. It is not at all certain that the young shall attain to old age, but it is certain that destruction is prepared for the young who die in impenitency. No time of life is more suitable for the service of God than youth, with its flourishing activities of body and mind. Thou shouldest never commit an evil deed to win the favor of any man, for not that man but God Himself shall one day judge thy life ; never deem, therefore, the favor of any man preferable to the grace of thy God. We are either making progress or losing ground in the way of the Lord ; examine thy life daily, therefore, to see whether thou art advancing in the pursuit of godliness or retrograding. To stand still in the way of the Lord is really to retrograde ; congratulate thyself, therefore, if thou art not standing still in the course of a godly life, but strive earnestly always to walk forward in the way of the Lord. In thy conversation be pleasant to all, be harsh to none, and familiar with few. Live piously towards God, chastely with thyself, justly towards thy neighbor. Treat thy friends kindly, thine enemies patiently, and all benevolently, and as far as possible also beneficently. Whilst thou livest die daily to thyself and to thy vices, that when thou diest thou mayest live unto God.

Let mercy always be manifest in thy disposition of mind; kindness in thy countenance, humility

in thy manner, modesty in thy intercourse with others, and patience in thy tribulations. Always consider the past with respect to these three things: the evil I have committed, the good I have omitted, and the time I have lost. Always consider the present with respect to these three things: the brevity of my present life, the difficulty of salvation, and the fewness of the saved. Always consider the future with respect to these three: death, than which nothing is more horrible; the judgment, than which nothing is more terrible; and the fires of hell, than which nothing can be more intolerable. Let thine evening prayers correct the sins of the day just past; and let the last day of the week correct the faults of the preceding days. Think every evening, how many have gone headlong into hell this day, and give thanks to God that He hath granted thee longer time for repentance. There are three things above thee, of which thou shouldst never lose sight: the all-seeing eye of God, His all-hearing ear, and His books in which all things are recorded. God hath given Himself wholly to thee; do thou give thyself wholly to thy neighbor. The best life on earth is that which is wholly spent in serving others. Reverence and obey thy superiors; counsel and aid thine equals; watch over and teach thine inferiors. Keep thy body in subjection to thy mind, and thy mind to God. Lament thy past misdeeds; do not

overvalue thy present good, and with thy whole heart strive after those future blessings which God hath set before thee. Remember thy sins, that thou mayst bewail them; be mindful of death, that thou mayst avoid sin; keep in mind the divine justice, that thou mayst fear to sin; and above all remember the mercy of thy God, lest thou yield to despair.

As far as possible withdraw from the world, and give thyself wholly to the service of the Lord. Always bear in mind that thy purity is imperiled by the pleasures of the world, thy humility by its riches, and thy godliness by its business cares. Seek to please no one but Christ, and fear to displease no one but Christ. Always pray God that He may command that which is pleasing to Him, and may give thee what He thus commands; that He may cover what thou hast done amiss, and may control all thy future course. Be in reality what thou desirest to appear to be, for God judgeth not according to the appearance but according to truth. In speech, let thy words be few, for every idle word must be accounted for at the judgment. Thy works, whatever they are, do not pass away, but are scattered abroad, as it were, as seeds that shall spring up in eternity. "For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 8). The honors of this world

shall not follow thee after death, nor all thy gathered riches, nor worldly pleasures or vanities; but the deeds which thou hast done shall follow thee beyond the bounds of this life (Rev. xiv. 13). As therefore thou wouldest stand before God in the judgment, thou shouldst appear in His sight to-day. Consider not so much what thou hast, as what is lacking in thee; instead of priding thyself upon what has been given thee, rather humble thyself because of what has been denied thee. Learn to live rightly, whilst thou art permitted to live. In this life eternal life is either won or lost; after death the time for works has past, and the time for receiving the reward of our present works begins.

Let holy meditation produce in thee a knowledge of thy true condition, and this lead thee to conviction of sin, and conviction beget in thee a spirit of devotion, and this indite thy prayer. Silence of the mouth is an excellent thing for peace of heart.

The more thou art separated from the world, the more pleasing thou wilt be to God. Whatever thou wouldest have, ask God for it; whatever thou hast already, ascribe it to God. He is not worthy of new blessings who is not grateful for those already given. The streams of heavenly blessing cease to flow down to us, when there are no return-streams of gratitude and praise to God. Turn to good account whatever befalls thee; if prosperity attends thy steps, think what an opportunity this

affords thee of blessing and praising God ; if adversity overtakes thee, think what an admonition it is to penitence and conversion. Employ thy power in aiding the weak, thy wisdom in instructing the ignorant, and thy riches in benefactions to the poor. Let not adversity crush thee, nor prosperity unduly exalt thee. Let Christ be the aim of thy life ; follow Him in this world, that thou mayst come at last into His fellowship in the heavenly fatherland. In all things let thy greatest care be to manifest deep humility and glowing love. Lovingly lift up thy heart to God and cling to Him; let humility so affect thy heart as to save thee from pride. Look upon God as thy Father in His clemency toward thee, and as thy Lord in His discipline of thee ; as thy Father in the gentler exercise of His power, as thy Lord in its severer; love Him affectionately as thy Heavenly Father; fear Him, of necessity, as thy Lord and Master. Love Him because He delights in mercy; fear Him because He delights not in sin. Fear the Lord, and hope thou in Him (Ps. xxxvii. 5); acknowledge thine own unworthiness, and tell forth the wonders of His grace.

O God, Thou who hast given us the desire to please Thee, give us also the grace to do that which is well-pleasing in Thy sight !

MEDITATION XXIX.

FALSE SECURITY.

False security is death.

CONSIDER, O devout soul, the difficulty of being saved, and thou wilt easily cast aside all sense of absolute security. Never and nowhere is such security possible; neither in heaven, nor in paradise, much less in this world. An angel fell even in the presence of God. Adam fell into sin in that delightful abode in which God placed him. Adam was created in the image of God (Gen. i. 27), and yet he was deceived by the wiles of the devil. Solomon was the wisest of men (1 Kings iii. 12), yet he was led away from the Lord through the enticements of the flesh (1 Kings xi. 3). Judas belonged to the very circle of Christ's disciples (Luke xxii. 3), and was under the daily instruction of that greatest of all teachers, and yet he was not safe from the snares of the great seducer; he cast himself headlong into the pit of avarice, and from that into the dark abyss of eternal woe. David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. xiii. 14),

and was as a most precious son to Jehovah, but through the awful sins of adultery and homicide he made himself a son of death (2 Sam. xii. 5). Where then in this life is there real security against falling into sin? Cling with a firm confidence of heart to the promises of God, and thou shalt be safe from the assaults of the devil. There can be no security in this life, except that afforded by the sure promises of God's word to those who believe and walk in the way of the Lord. When we finally attain the blessedness of heaven, then we shall enjoy perfect security. In this life fear and religion have a close connection, nor ought there to be the one without the other. Cherish not a sense of security simply because thou art suffering adversity; but rather regard thine adversities as scourgings for thy sins. God often chastises us openly for our secret faults. Reflect upon the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and then fear the righteous avenger of sin. Neither feel secure because thou art enjoying prosperity; for to be wholly unreproved in this life is rather a mark of God's wrath. What are the afflictions of the godly? They are as bitter arrows to the soul, and yet sent from the merciful hand of God. God apparently does not chastise in this world, whom He will nevertheless punish eternally. Uninterrupted human happiness here is frequently a sad token of eternal condemnation in the other world. Nothing

is more unhappy than the happiness of those living in sin, and nothing is more miserable than the man who is ignorant of his miserable condition in sin. Whithersoever thou turnest thine eyes thou findest cause for grief, and beholdest much to forbid any sense of security. Turn thy thoughts upwards to thy God whom we have offended; downwards to the hell which we have merited; backwards to the sins we have committed; forward to the judgment which we fear; inwardly to conscience which we have befouled with sin; outwardly to the world which we have loved. Behold, whence thou camest, and blush; where thou now art, and grieve; whither thou art going, and tremble. Narrow indeed is the door of salvation, but the way that leads to it is still narrower (Matt. vii. 14).

God hath given thee the treasure of faith, but thou carriest that treasure in an earthen vessel (2 Cor. iv. 7). God hath given holy angels to guard thee (Ps. xci. 11), but the devil waits not far off to lead thee astray. He hath renewed thee in the spirit of thy mind (Eph. iv. 23), but still thou hast the oldness of the flesh to struggle with. Thou hast been established in the grace of God, but art not yet confirmed in eternal glory. A heavenly mansion is prepared for thee, but first thou must struggle with a wicked world. God hath promised pardon to the penitent, but He hath

not promised to give the inclination to repent to anyone while wilfully persisting in sin. The consolations of eternal life await thee, but yet thou must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts xiv. 22). A crown of eternal glory hath been promised thee, but thou must pass through a severe conflict before thou canst wear that crown. God's promises are unchangeable; but then thou must not relax for a moment thy zeal in a holy life. If the servant fail to do what is commanded, the Lord will do what He threatens. Therefore laying aside all false security we must continually mourn and lament on account of our sins, lest God desert us in an act of just and secret judgment, and we are left in the hands of devils to be destroyed.

While God's grace is thine, rejoice in it, and yet think not that thou possessest this gift of God by hereditary right, and that thou art so securely in possession of it, that thou canst never lose it, lest if God should suddenly take away His gift and withdraw His hand, thou shouldst become disheartened and fall into despair.

Happy art thou, indeed, if thou takest all care to avoid a careless indifference, that fruitful cause of so many evils. God will not forsake thee, but take good heed lest thou forsake God. God hath bestowed His grace upon thee, pray that He may give thee also perseverance unto the end. God so orders

the economy of grace that we may have assurance of our salvation, and yet not in such a way that one may indulge in self-security. Thou must fight the good fight of faith (2 Tim. iv. 7) bravely, that at length thou mayest triumph gloriously. Thy flesh within thee fighteth against thee; a more formidable enemy to thee because so much nearer thee than any others. The world without thee fighteth against thee; a more formidable enemy to thee than any other because so much more abundant in its allurements. The devil above thee fighteth against thee; a more formidable enemy to thee than any other because so much more powerful. In the strength of God thou needest not fear to engage with all these enemies, and by that strength thou shalt gain the victory. But such enemies as these thou wilt never conquer by a mere sense of security, but by waging an incessant warfare against them. Life is the time to fight this fight of faith; and when thou art apparently unconscious of the conflict, thou art in more peril from the assaults of these foes; for when they seem to be observing a truce, then are they really massing their forces for a more powerful attack upon thy soul. They are vigilant, and art thou sleeping? They are preparing themselves to injure thee, and wilt not thou prepare thyself to resist them? Many fall by the way before reaching the heavenly fatherland. Alas! how many of the Children of Israel

perished in the wilderness, not one of whom obtained the promise (Deut. i. 35). And how many of the spiritual children of Abraham miserably perish in the wilderness of this life, before obtaining the promised inheritance of the heavenly kingdom ! Nothing should more effectively lead us to cast away false security than the thought of the comparatively small number of those who persevere to the end. Therefore let us cherish such a desire for the heavenly glory, and with it such a passionate longing to attain it, such a sense of sorrow that we have not as yet gained it, and such a fear that after all we may not, that we shall take joy in nothing that does not afford us aid in, or confirm our hope of, coming into possession of it at last. What profit is there in enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season, if we must spend eternity in woe ? What joy can there be in this life if what delights us here is only temporary, but what torments us is eternal ?

We live on in false security, just as though we had already passed the hour of death and the judgment. Christ says that in such an hour as we think not (Matt. xxiv. 44, 50), He will come to judge us. Thus the Truth speaks, and in one way and another solemnly repeats it ; give ear then and take heed ! If our Lord shall come in an hour when we are not looking for Him, then we ought to fear greatly lest we be unprepared to appear before Him at the judgment. And if we go thither

unprepared how shall we ever endure the awful test of that judgment? What we shall lose in that one moment, that sentence is pronounced upon us, we cannot regain forever. In the brief space of a moment it shall be determined what we shall be through all eternity; in that single moment, life and death, condemnation and salvation, eternal punishment and eternal glory shall be awarded to each soul according to its deserts.

O Lord, do Thou, who hast given me grace to live a holy life, give me also grace, to persevere in that life to the end!

MEDITATION XXX.

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST.

Let Christ be the Rule of thy Life.

THE holy life of Christ is the most perfect model of virtue we can have; every action of His is rich in instruction for us. Many wish to attain to Christ, but refuse to follow Him; many wish to enjoy Christ, but not to imitate Him. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29), says our Saviour. Unless thou art willing to be a disciple of Christ, thou wilt never be a true Christian. Let the passion of Christ be thy merit, but at the same time let His holy life be the model for thine. Thy Beloved is white and ruddy (Cant. v. 10); and so mayest thou be ruddy by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and white by the imitation of His life. How dost thou truly love Christ, if thou dost not love His holy life? "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," says the Saviour (John xiv. 15, 23). Hence he who keepeth not His commandments loveth Him not.

The holy life of Christ is a perfect rule of con-

duct for our lives, and a rule that is to be preferred to all the rules of such saints as Francis and Benedict. If thou wouldest be an adopted son of God, behold how thy Saviour, the only-begotten Son of God, lived in this world. If thou wouldest be a joint heir with Christ, thou shouldst also be an imitator of Christ. He who voluntarily lives in open vice has given himself to the service of the devil. But how can such an one live the life of Christ? To love vice is to love the devil; because all sin is of the devil (1 John iii. 8). And how can a man be a true lover of Christ who is a lover of the devil? To love God is to love a holy life, because every holy life is of God; how can one then be a lover of God who is not a lover of a holy life? The proof of love is in our works; it is characteristic of love to obey the loved one, to be in perfect accord in mind and heart with the loved one. If then thou truly lovest Christ, thou wilt obey His commands, thou wilt love a holy life with Him, and being renewed in the spirit of thy mind, thou wilt meditate upon heavenly things (Eph. iv. 23). Life eternal is a knowledge of Christ (John xvii. 3): but he who loves not Christ does not even know Him; he who loves not humility, purity, gentleness, temperance, charity, does not love Christ, for the life of Christ is nothing else than the embodiment of these several virtues. Christ says that He knows not those who do not the will of His Father (Matt. vii.

21); hence those who disobey the will of the heavenly Father do not know Christ. But what is the will of the Father? "Our sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3) says the apostle. He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of His (Rom. viii. 9); but where the Spirit is there His gifts and fruits will manifest themselves. But what are fruits of the Spirit? "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22). As the Spirit rested upon Christ (Is. xi. 2), so He rests also upon all those united to Christ by true faith, for the beloved of Christ rejoices in the savor of His good ointments (Cant. i. 3). He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). Just as a man and a woman joined together in holy matrimony are no more twain but one flesh (Matt. xix. 6) so the spiritual union of Christ and the believing soul makes of them one spirit. But where there is one spirit, there is the same will; and where there is the same will, there will be the same actions also. And thus if one's life conform not to the life of Christ, it is clearly evident that he is neither clinging to Christ nor has the Spirit of Christ. Is it not proper that our whole life should be conformed to Christ's, since He has conformed Himself to our low estate out of pure love for us? God manifesting Himself in the flesh (1 Tim. iii. 16) has afforded us a perfect example of a holy life, so that no one might

excuse his failure to live such a life by appealing to the weakness of the flesh. No life can be more joyful and tranquil than Christ's, because Christ was true God ; and what can be more joyful and tranquil than the true God Himself, the highest good? Life in this world affords but short-lived joy, but even that is followed by eternal sorrow. To whom thou dost conform thyself in this life, to him thou shalt be conformed in the resurrection. If thou dost begin to conform thyself to the life of Christ here, then in the resurrection thou wilt be more fully conformed to Him ; but if thou art like the devil here in sin, then in the resurrection thou wilt be like him in torment.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily," says our Saviour (Mt. xvi. 24). If in this life thou dost deny thyself, then in the judgment Christ will acknowledge thee as His own. If for Christ's sake thou dost renounce in this life thine own honor, thine own love, thine own will, then in the future life Christ will graciously make thee a sharer of His own honor, His own love, His own will. If thou bearest the cross after Him here, thou shalt share in His eternal glory over there. If thou art a partaker of tribulation with Him here, thou wilt be a partaker of His heavenly consolation over there. If thou sufferest persecution with Him in this world, thou shalt participate in the glorious recom-

pense of reward in the world to come. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men," says Christ, "him will I also confess before My father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 32). And indeed we ought to confess Christ not only by a profession of the truth He taught, but also by conforming our lives to His; and so at last, in the day of judgment, will He acknowledge us as His before His Father in heaven. "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x. 33). Now we may deny Christ not only in so many words, but by an ungodly life. If any man denies Christ by his deeds in this world, Christ will also deny him by His actions at the judgment. He is not a Christian who has not a true faith in Christ; but a true faith in Christ engrafts us as branches into Him (John xv. 4). Every branch in Christ that beareth not fruit the heavenly husbandman taketh away. But he who abides in Christ and in whom Christ dwells by faith (Eph. iii. 17), bears much fruit. The branch that draws not its life-force from the vine is not really in the vine. And the soul that does not draw love, its spiritual nourishment from Christ by faith, is really not united to Christ by faith.

Make us more and more like Thee, O blessed Jesus, that in the world to come we may be perfectly conformed to Thee!

MEDITATION XXXI.

SELF-DENIAL.

Self-indulgence is Denial of Christ.

“IF any man will come after Me let him deny himself” (Matt. xvi. 24), says our Saviour. To deny oneself is to renounce self-love; self-love hinders the love of God in the soul. If thou wouldest be a disciple of Christ it is necessary that the root of self-love should wholly die in thee. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die” it bear-eth no fruit (John xii. 24); and so likewise the fruit of the Holy Spirit cannot appear in thy life unless self-love die in thy heart. The Lord said unto Abraham (Gen. xii. 1) “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” Abraham could never have become so great a prophet, if he had not first forsaken his own land; and so thou wilt never become a true disciple of Christ nor a truly spiritual man, unless thou dost first withdraw thyself from the love of thyself. Jacob became lame of one foot in his struggle with

the angel, whilst the other remained well and sound. By these two feet we may figuratively understand a two-fold love, the love of self and the love of God; a man becomes a partaker of the divine blessing, when he becomes disabled in that one foot, that is, when the love of self is destroyed; while the other foot remains sound and whole, that is, while the love of God abides in his heart. It is impossible for thee to look up to the sky and down to the ground with the same eye at the same time; so no one can with the same will love himself inordinately and God at the same time. Love is the highest good of the soul; it must therefore be rendered as a grateful tribute to the Highest Good, that is, to God.

Thy love is thy God; that is, whatever thou lovest most deeply thou puttest in the place of God. Whatever thou lovest best, thou judgest to be the best and most worthy of love. But God is really the highest Being. He who loves himself therefore makes a god of himself, puts self in the place of God, which is the worst form of idolatry. What thou lovest most is to thee an end of all things, and the ultimate fruition of all desires. But God alone is the beginning and the end to all created things. He Himself is the first and the last (Is. xliv. 6). He alone satisfies the desires of our hearts, and no mere creature whatsoever can fully satisfy them. Thou oughtest therefore to prefer the love of God

to the love of self. "God is the Beginning and the Ending" (Rev. i. 8); hence our love ought to begin and end in Him. The essence of God is apart from and beyond all creatures; as from all eternity He has been God in Himself alone; withdraw thy love then from all creatures and fix it upon God. As thy love is, so will thy deeds be. If thy deeds are inspired by a true faith in God and love for Him, they are pleasing to God and of great account in His eyes, however insignificant they may be in the eyes of men. If on the other hand they are inspired by self-love, they never can be pleasing to God. Love of self will mar the most excellent works thou canst perform. When Christ was in the house of Simon (Matt. xxvi. 6), a certain woman broke a box of precious ointment and anointed the head of Christ. The act seemed small and insignificant, and yet it was pleasing to Christ, because it proceeded from true faith, pure love, and sincere contrition. Sacrifices were pleasing to God under the Old Testament dispensation; and yet God was greatly displeased that Saul (1 Sam. xv. 19) set apart the spoil taken from the Amalekites to be offered in sacrifice, because he did not do this out of pure love for God. If he had really loved God he would not disobediently have despised the command of God to devote all this spoil to destruction. He loved himself, and thought more of his devotions than of his God. Love is a sort of fire; for

thus the Church prays, "Come, Holy Spirit, kindle the flame of Thy love in the hearts of Thy faithful people." A kindled fire is not content to lie upon the ground, but the sparks always fly upwards. So thy love ought not to rest in thyself and terminate there, but it ought to wing itself upward to God.

To deny one's self is, moreover, to renounce one's own honor. But our highest honor ought to be connected with the highest good alone, and God is that highest good. If we seek our own glory we cannot seek God's glory, as the Saviour said to the Pharisees, "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another" (John v. 44)? Behold the example of Christ, and follow that; He frequently declares of Himself that He seeks not His own glory (John viii. 50), that He receives not honor of men (John v. 41), that He is lowly in heart (Matt. xi. 29). Thou receivest all from God, render in return all to Him. All the streams of blessing we enjoy flow from the fountain of divine goodness; hence all the good we have ought to be borne back again into that ocean of divine love. The sun-flower is said to be always turning itself toward the sun from which it draws its life and nourishment. So do thou, with all thy gifts and all thy honor, keep always turning thyself to God, and give no honor to thyself. If thou hadst anything of thyself then thou mightest seek thine own honor, and

bestow thy gifts upon thyself; but since all thou hast cometh from God, thou shouldst seek not thine own honor, but His. To honor thyself turns thee away from God. Nebuchadnezzar is an example of this when he said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty" (Dan. iv. 30)? But what follows? "While the word was in the King's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field" (Dan. iv. 31, 32). So if thou gloriest in thy good works as the product of thine own honor and pride, and givest not the glory of them to God alone, He will cast thee away from His presence forever.

Finally to deny one's self is to renounce one's own will. We ought always obey that will which is supremest and best, and that is God's. We ought to obey His will from whom we receive all things (1 Cor. iv. 7); but all things come down to us from God. We ought to obey his will who always leads us in the way of life and goodness; but it is God's will that always so leads us. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Ps. xxxvii. 4). Our own will leads us to death and condemnation. How did our first

parents fall from the grace of God and their holy estate into eternal condemnation? Disregarding God's will they followed their own, disobeyed God's command, and gave heed to the devil's counsel. Hence the true disciple of Christ, renouncing his own will, desires to follow that of God. Behold Christ, thy Saviour; in the agony of His awful passion He lays His own will on the altar as a most pleasing sacrifice unto God; and so do thou offer up thine own will unto God, and thou shalt indeed accomplish that which Christ requires of thee as a disciple, the denial of thine own self.

May Thy holy will, O Lord, be done on earth as it is in heaven.

MEDITATION XXXII.

TRUE PEACE OF SOUL.

The Mind that Rests in the Lord is at Peace.

THE soul often seeks rest and peace in transitory and worldly things, but finds them not. And why? Because the soul is of far more worth than all created things; it cannot therefore find the rest and peace it seeks in these meaner objects. All things of earth are fleeting and transitory; but the soul is immortal; how then can it find peace in these? All these are of the earth earthy, but our souls are of heavenly origin, how then could these satisfy its holy desires? In Christ alone it finds the peace it seeks (Matt. xi. 29); He only can satisfy and fully meet its immortal desires. Against the holy wrath of God, it quietly rests in the wounds of Christ the Saviour; against the accusations of Satan in the almighty power of Christ; against the terrors of the law in the gospel of Christ; against her accusing sins in the precious blood of Christ, that speaketh better things in the presence of God than the blood of Abel (Heb. xii. 24); against the fear of death it

reposes in joyful confidence in the intercession of Christ at the right hand of the Father above. And so faith finds rest in Christ; but our love also finds there its most blessed repose. If we set our hearts upon earthly things, we shall not have this true peace, because these earthly things themselves do not have it, nor can they possibly satisfy the longings of the soul, because they are finite, whilst our souls, made in the image of God, ardently long for that Infinite Good, in whom all good things are. As then our faith ought to rely upon nothing in all the world but the merit of Christ alone, so also our love should be set upon no earthly object, not even upon ourselves. The love of self hinders the love of God, and we ought to prefer that love to all things else. Our soul is the bride of Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2); it ought then to cling to Him alone. Our soul is the temple of God (1 Cor. iii. 16), and hence it ought to be the dwelling-place of God alone.

Many seek for rest of soul in earthly riches, but out of Christ it cannot be found; where Christ is, there is poverty if not in outward reality, at least in spirit and feeling. When on earth, the Lord of heaven and earth did not have where to lay His head (Matt. viii. 20); and thus He would commend and consecrate the life of poverty we may be called upon to lead. Riches are something external to us; but the soul can look for true peace only within itself. And in the hour of death when all

earthly things must be given up, to whom will thy soul then cling? Either riches desert us or we them; frequently this occurs in life, and always at death. Where then will thy soul find the peace and rest for which it longs?

Many hope to find rest in pleasure. Now pleasure may afford a certain rest and joy to the body for awhile, but not to the soul, and at the last it is always attended by pain and grief. Pleasure has respect to this life; but the soul is not created for this life alone, since at death it is obliged to leave it for another life; how then can it find true rest in pleasure? Out of Christ thou canst find no true peace for thy soul. But what was the life of Christ in this respect? All His life from His birth to His death was one of deepest sorrow. So He, who could rightly estimate the value of all earthly things, would teach us how to regard pleasure.

Many seek rest in worldly honors. But miserable indeed are they who are dependent for honor upon the fickle winds of popular favor. Honor is an external and short-lived good. But again that which ought to afford rest of soul must be within us. What more canst thou say of human praise and honor, than has been said of that famous picture of Apelles, the Grecian painter? Consider the little corner of the world in which thou art hid; what proportion it bears to the whole province in which thou dwellest, to the whole of Europe, to the

whole round world. That only is true honor, which God will by and by bestow upon His elect children. The rest of any natural object is in its end; nor does it rest naturally until it has attained its true end and place. The end of a human soul is God Himself, since it is created indeed in His image. It can never then be at rest and peace, except as it attains the end of its being, that is God. As the life of the body is the soul, so the life of the soul is God; as therefore that soul truly lives in which God graciously dwells, so that soul is spiritually dead in which God dwells not. But how can there be rest to a dead soul? This first death in sin necessarily involves that second death unto eternal damnation (Rev. xx. 6).

And so it is that these evils without him cannot possibly disturb the rest of soul which he possesses, whose heart is firmly fixed upon God, and who enjoys His blessed divine consolations. In sorrow he is joyful; in poverty he is rich; in the tribulations of this world he is secure; in all the storms and commotions of this life he is tranquil; amidst the abuses and insults of wicked men he is peaceful; and in the hour of death itself he lives. He regards not the threats of tyrants, because in his heart he experiences the rich consolations of Almighty God. In adversity he is not cast down with sorrow, because the Holy Spirit inwardly supports and comforts him. He is not distressed be-

cause poor in this world's goods, for he is rich in the goodness of God. He is not disturbed by the insults of men, because his heart rejoices in the honors God heaps upon him. He cares not for the pleasures of sense, because he has far greater joy in the ministries of the blessed Spirit. He seeks not worldly friendships, because he rejoices in the friendship of God reconciled to him through the blood of His Son. He covets not the treasures of earth, because he has a treasure laid up in heaven of priceless value. He fears not death, because he ever lives in God. He does not greatly desire worldly wisdom, because he has the Holy Spirit (1 John ii. 20) dwelling within him, teaching him, whose perfect teaching does away with the more imperfect (1 Cor. xiii. 10). He has no fear of lightnings and tempests, of fire and flood, of direful configurations of the planets, and eclipses of the heavenly luminaries, because exalted above all the powers and forces of nature he reposes calmly in Christ by faith, and lives in holy union with Him. He is not led astray by the allurements of the world, because deep in his soul he hears the far sweeter voice of Christ. He fears not the power of the devil, because he is sensible of God's forbearance toward him. Christ who lives in him and is the all-powerful conqueror is stronger far than the devil, who busies himself in vain to conquer him. He yields not to the enticements of the flesh, be-

cause living in the Spirit of God he experiences the riches of His grace, whose quickening power crucifies and puts to death the sinful flesh (Gal. v. 24). He feels no dread of the accusations of Satan at the last day, because he is assured of the intercessions of Christ in his behalf.

And now may He, who is the only author and giver of this true rest, our Lord Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed forevermore, grant it unto our souls!

MEDITATION XXXIII.

PURITY OF CONSCIENCE.

A Conscience void of offence is light to the Soul.

In all thou doest, guard carefully thy conscience. If the devil incites thee to the commission of any sin, honor its judgment. If thou fearest to sin in the presence of thy fellow-men, much more should thine own conscience restrain thee from sinning. This inward witness against thee is of more force than any outward testimony. Although thy sins may escape the notice and condemnation of men, yet thou never canst escape the inward testimony of thy conscience. Thy conscience will be one of those books, of which Revelation speaks, that are to be opened at the great judgment day (Rev. x. 12, 15). The first book is that of Divine Omniscience, in which shall plainly appear the deeds, the words, the thoughts of all men of all times and all climes. The second book is Christ Himself, the Book of Life; and whosoever, by true faith, is found written in this book shall be conducted by the holy angels into the heavenly assembly. The Holy

Scriptures are the third book, according to which our faith and works shall be judged. "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 48), says our Saviour. The fourth book contains the external testimony of the poor whom we may have aided, who in the day of judgment shall receive us into everlasting habitations (Luke xvi. 9). The fifth book contains the internal testimony of conscience, in which are written all our sins. A large volume is conscience, and in it all our deeds have been inscribed with the pen of truth. The wicked cannot deny their sins in the judgment, because they will be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences. Nor will they be able to escape the accusation of their own sins, because the judgment-seat of conscience is within them, in the privacy of their own being, which they cannot evade.

A pure conscience is as a shining mirror, in which one beholds himself and God. But if the sight be dimmed it cannot see the splendor of the True Light. Hence our Saviour says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). We take delight in a pure and beautiful face, and so a pure and guiltless conscience is pleasing in the eyes of God; but a corrupted conscience brings forth "the worm that dieth not." This "worm of conscience" we ought to perceive and destroy in this life, and not nourish it, through our sins, into immortality.

To correct this book of conscience all the others have been devised. Of what avail will superior knowledge be to us, if our conscience is impure? Not out of the book of knowledge, but out of that of conscience, thou wilt one day be judged before God's throne. If thou wouldst write this book correctly, write it after the pattern of the Book of Life, and that is Christ Jesus Himself. Let thy profession of faith be conformed to Christ's rule of doctrine, and the whole course of thy life to His rule of life. Thou wilt have a good conscience, if thou art pure in heart, true in word, honest in deed. Use thy conscience as a light to direct thee in all thy deeds; for it will truly show thee what thou oughtest to do and what thou oughtest not to do. Avoid a trial at the bar of thine own conscience; for here thou must appear at the same time as defendant and plaintiff, as witness and judge, as the torturer, as the prison, as the scourge, as the executor, as the hangman. Pray how canst thou escape, when thine own conscience is the accusing witness against thee, and nothing can be concealed from Him who judges thee? What profits it though all men praise thee, if thy conscience accuses thee? And, on the other hand, what can possibly prejudice thy case if thou hast the testimony of a good conscience? This one judge alone is sufficient to accuse, to judge, to condemn every single individual. This judge is im-

partial, and cannot be turned aside by entreaties nor bribed with gifts. Whithersoever thou goest, wherever thou art, thou bearest thy conscience with thee, and it carefully guards whatever thou committest to its keeping, whether it be good or bad. What it thus receives it preserves for thee while living, and faithfully restores to thee when thou art dead. Truly a man's foes are those of his own household (Matt. x. 36); so in thine own personal house, and from thine own personal family, thou hast thine own accusers, thine own spies upon thy conduct, thine own torturers for thine evil deeds. What can it profit thee to live in plenty and affluence, if thou art tortured with the scourge of thine own evil conscience? The springs of human happiness and misery are in the soul itself. What good does it do one burning with fever to lie on a golden bed? What joy can treasures of external happiness afford to one who is tormented by the flames of a guilty conscience?

As thou carest for thine eternal salvation, so guard thy conscience; for if a good conscience is lost, faith is also lost; and faith lost means the grace of God lost; and the grace of God lost, how canst thou hope for eternal life? According to the testimony of thy conscience thou mayst look for the judgment of Christ. Sinners shall become their own accusers; no one need bring a charge against them. Just as a drunkard while filling

himself with wine is not sensible of its evil effects, but when he awakes from his drunken stupor suffers the miseries of his debauch; so while sin is being committed it darkens the mind and clouds the better judgment; but when conscience is at last aroused it torments us more severely than any other accuser possibly could. There are three judgments; the world's, thine own, and God's judgment. But as thou canst not escape thine own judgment so thou canst not that of God, although thou mayst at times avoid the world's judgment. The most massive walls cannot hinder this witness beholding all thy deeds. What excuse canst thou offer in thy defense, when thy conscience within thee condemns thee?

A quiet conscience is the very beginning of eternal life; thou wilt more truly rejoice in the hardships of life with a good conscience than amidst all its pleasures with a guilty one. Against all the malice of wicked men thou canst appeal to a conscience void of offense. Question thyself closely concerning thyself, because thou knowest thyself far better than any one else knows thee. At the last judgment what will all the insincere praises of others profit thee, or how will all their false detractions harm thee? Thou wilt then stand or fall by the judgment of God and of thyself, and not on the testimony of others. Conscience never dies, as the soul never dies. So long as the lost suffer the tor-

ments of hell, so long shall the accusations of a guilty conscience continue. Material fire cannot so severely afflict the body as the flames of a guilty conscience can torture the soul. Eternal is the soul which burns in the fires of hell, and eternal is the fire of conscience which burns in the soul. No scourge can fall upon the body with such awful severity as the lashes of a guilty conscience upon a lost soul. Therefore flee the guilt of sin, that thou mayst escape the torments of conscience. Erase, by sincere repentance, thy sins from the book of conscience, lest they be read against thee in the dreadful day of judgment, and in horror thou hear-est the voice of God pronounce thy doom. By the fervor of thy devotion destroy the worm of con-science, lest its horrible sting torment thee forever and ever. By thy penitential tears extinguish the flames of a guilty conscience, that thou mayst en-joy the delights of heavenly consolation.

O Lord Jesus, grant that we may fight the good fight (2 Tim. iv. 7), holding faith and a good con-science, so that at last we may reach our heavenly fatherland in safety and in peace!

MEDITATION XXXIV.

'THE CULTIVATION OF TRUE HUMILITY.

What is Man? What is a Bubble? They are alike Nothing.

CONSIDER, O faithful soul, the lowly condition of man, and thou wilt the more easily avoid all temptation to pride. He enters the world as a helpless infant; his passage through it is attended with constant miseries, and he leaves it in tears. All his life long, he is assaulted by evil spirits, assailed by temptations, allured by worldly pleasures, cast down by tribulations, robbed of his virtues, and entangled in the meshes of evil habits. Why then should he be proud, since he is but dust and ashes? What was thy body before thy birth? Merely a corrupt seed. What is it in life? A living mass of corruption. And what will it be after death? It will simply serve as a repast for worms. If there is anything good in thee, it is not thine own, but of God. Nothing is thine own but thy sins; of all that is in thee, then, these are all thou canst claim. Foolish and faithless is that servant who would

personally pride himself upon what belongs to his master.

Consider, O man, the example of Christ. All the glory of heaven was at His command, nay more, He Himself alone is true Glory, and yet He casts away from Himself all worldly glory as worthless. And then He says: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. xi. 29). He who truly loves Christ will imitate Him; and if Christ be precious to Him, so will His humility also. Let the proud and haughty servant blush in confusion when he considers that the Lord of glory is so humble. Our Saviour calls Himself "The Lily of the Valley" (Cant. ii. 1); and He seems to use this figure because He, the noblest of flowers, grows and flourishes, not on the lofty mountain-tops, that is, in hearts lifted up with pride, but in the humbler vales, that is, in the lowly and contrite minds of the godly. For truly the humble soul is the seat and couch of Christ, where He delights to make His abode, as St. Augustine puts it. True grace does not make one proud, but humble. Thou art not yet a partaker of the true grace of God, if thou walkest not in humility of heart. The streams of divine grace flow downwards, not upwards. As nature's streams seek the lowlands, so those of divine grace flow down into lowly hearts. The Psalmist says: The Lord our God dwelleth on high, and beholdeth the humble things in heaven

and on earth (Ps. cxiii. 5, 6). It is indeed wonderful that we can approach God, the highest and greatest of all beings, only in an humble spirit. He who is lowly in his own eyes, is great in God's sight ; he who is displeasing to himself, is pleasing to God. Out of nothing God created the heavens and the earth. As it was in man's creation, so it is in his regeneration ; He creates him out of nothing (Heb. xi. 3) ; He re-creates him out of nothing. That thou mayest therefore become a partaker of God's grace in regeneration and renewal, be nothing in thine own eyes, give no honor to thyself, claim nothing for thyself. We are all weak and frail, but judge no one more so than thyself. It will do thee no harm, in extreme humility, to judge thyself weaker and more insignificant than all others ; but it will harm thee, to regard thyself in self-sufficient pride as superior to any one else. The four and twenty elders, that is, the whole triumphant Church of God, cast their crowns before the throne (Rev. iv. 4, 10), and ascribe righteousness and glory to God. What then shall a poor unworthy sinner do ? The seraphim and holy angels veil their faces in the presence of the divine majesty (Is. vi. 2) ; what then shall we do, creatures so sinful, so unworthy, and so displeasing in a multitude of ways to our Creator ? Christ the true and only begotten Son of God, in a marvelous display of humility, descended from heaven and took upon Himself our

frail human nature, "and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Oh, what then shall we do to exhibit our humility, who have gone so far astray from God through our sins and iniquities?

Behold, O faithful soul, how thy Saviour hath rebuked thy pride, by that stupendous exhibition of humility! And in the face of this wouldest thou still lift up thy soul with pride? Christ entered into His glory by the lowly path of His bitter passion (Luke xxiv. 26), and dost thou think that thou canst enter into that heavenly glory by the highway of pride? The devil was cast out of the kingdom of heaven for his pride, and dost thou, when thou art not yet in that world of glory, strive after it in pride and haughtiness of spirit? Adam for his pride was driven out of paradise (Gen. iii. 24); and dost thou think to enter the heavenly paradise by way of the same pride? Let us rather desire to take the servant's place with Christ, and even wash the feet of others, as He did, than to live a life of worldly honor in company with Satan. Let us humble ourselves in this life that we may be exalted in the life that is to come. Ever consider, O faithful soul, not what thou hast, but what thou lackest. Far rather grieve for the virtues which thou hast not, than glory over those which thou hast. Rather conceal thy virtues, and make known

tly sins, for indeed it is to be feared that if thou dost openly boast of thy treasure of good works, the devil may rob thee of it through thy pride. Thou canst preserve burning coals by covering them over with ashes. And so the fire of our love to God is never more securely guarded than when it is buried under the ashes of true humility. Pride is the seed of all sin. Take good heed then that thou exalt not thyself, lest thou fall headlong into a dark abyss of sin. A proud heart is a most delightful retreat for the devil; beware then of pride lest through it thou shouldst put thy poor soul under bondage to him. Pride is a scorching wind drying up the fountains of divine grace in the heart; beware then of lifting up thyself with pride, lest thou deprive thyself of the influences of God's grace.

O blessed Christ, do Thou graciously heal the swelling pride of our hearts. May we rest our hopes of eternal life on the merit of Thy holy humility! May that humility be the pattern of our lives! May our faith more firmly lay hold of Thy humility, and our lives be ever fashioned after Thy lowly life!

MEDITATION XXXV.

AVOIDING AVARICE.

Who is a Really Poor Man? The Avaricious Man.

As we love the salvation of our souls, we ought to hate the sin of avarice. The avaricious man is the poorest of all men, because what he has fails him as much as what he has not. He is the most distressed of all, because he is good to no one, and worst towards himself. The beginning of all sin is pride; the root of all evil is avarice (1 Tim. vi. 10). Pride draws the soul away from God; avarice turns it to created things. Riches are acquired by the sweat of the brow; they are held in possession in constant fear; cause bitter pain if lost; and what is worse than all, the labors of avaricious men will not only perish, but they are deadly in their effects upon their souls. Riches will either desert thee or thou them. If, therefore, thy hope is placed in riches, what will become of that hope in the hour of death? How wilt thou trust thine immortal soul to God, if thou dost not trust the care of thy body to Him now? Thou art an object of care

to Almighty God, why dost thou doubt His power to sustain thee? Thou art an object of care to the All-wise God; why dost thou doubt His willingness to sustain thee? Thou art an object of care to the most bountiful God; why again dost thou doubt whether He is willing to sustain thee? Thou hast the solemn pledge of Christ, the Lord of all things in heaven and on earth, that if we "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us" (Matt. vi. 33). Trust this promise of Christ, it will not fail; for He is "the Truth" (John xiv. 6). Avarice is the height of idolatry (Col. iii. 5), because it puts the creature in the place of God the Creator. The avaricious man transfers the confidence that he ought to repose in God to the things of earth, the work of His hands. Whatever is loved more than God is preferred to God, and is hence put in the place of God. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage (Gen. xxv. 33). And thus many, for the sake of mere temporal good, will part with their heavenly inheritance bestowed upon them by Christ Himself. Judas sold his Lord for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. xxvi. 15); and the avaricious likewise sell the grace of Christ for earthly riches. How can one filling himself daily with swine's husks aspire to the kingdom of heaven? How can one lift up his heart to God, who seeks peace of soul in the riches of this world?

Christ, the Truth, says that riches are as thorns (Matt. xiii. 22), and hence he who loves riches loves thorns. O these thorns, in how many souls do they choke the good seed! As the thorns spring up and hinder the growth of the good seed sown, so does the anxiety for riches hinder the spiritual fruit of the Word. As thorns pierce the body, so riches distract the mind with cares. Thou too wilt perish, if thou gatherest together only such treasures as will perish. Those who lay up treasures upon the earth are like people who store their fruits in damp places under ground, forgetting that there they will most quickly decay. How foolish are they whose only desires are for worldly riches! How can any material object satisfy the soul, which is spiritual in its nature, since rather the spiritual nature, by the very law of its own being, bears such a relation to material objects that it never could be satisfied with any quantity of them? Thy soul was created for eternity; thou wouldst do it an injury then, if thou shouldst confine its desires to objects that are temporal and transient in character. The more thy soul rises in its love to God, the less will it love riches.

"The fowls of the air sow not, neither do they reap" (Matt. vi. 26); in the case of these lower creatures of God's hands, it almost seems as if the nearer the sky they dwell, the less do they desire, and the less do they lay up. It is a good indication

that our souls are fixing their affections on things above, when we lightly value and despise the perish-
ing things of earth. Mice and reptiles gather in
holes and caves of the earth, because they are of a
lower order of nature than the birds of the air.
And it is a certain sign that our souls have forsaken
God and are fixed upon earthly things, if we love
riches inordinately. God hath given thee thy soul,
and canst thou not commit the care of thy body to
Him? God feeds the fowls of the air, and dost
thou doubt His willingness to sustain thee who art
made in His own image? God clothes the lilies of
the field, and dost thou doubt that He will also
clothe thee? We ought to be ashamed that, with
faith and reason, we can not exercise the same trust-
ful dependence upon God that the birds do, with
only natural instinct. They sow not, neither do
they reap, but with an instinctive trust commit the
care of their little bodies to God.

But an avaricious man will not trust the word
of the Most High God, till he himself sees whence
his daily bread is coming. This is very unreason-
able in him, because he brought nothing with
him into the world; and yet he is bent upon the
acquisition of worldly riches, as though he would
carry with him out of this world as much as he
possibly could lay hold of. The avaricious man
is most ungrateful, because he enjoys so many of
God's blessed gifts, and yet never gratefully and

trustfully turns his heart to the Giver of all these. He is a most stupidly foolish man, because he forsakes God, the *only* true Good, and sets his heart upon those things which, without the grace of God, cannot possibly be good. He whose heart is bound up in these earthly things does not really possess them, but is possessed by them.

The spirit of avarice is not destroyed either by plenty or want. Dire want diminishes it not, for the inability to obtain what he wants merely whets the desire of the avaricious man. Neither does an abundance of this world's goods diminish it; for the more the avaricious man obtains the more he wants. As soon as one desire is gratified others immediately spring up, just as the more wood you heap on a fire the more fiercely it burns. Avariciousness is like a mountain torrent, very small in its beginning, but enlarging and gathering new force as it rolls down the mountain side. Set due bounds, therefore, to thy desire for wealth, lest it drag thee down into eternal perdition. Many greedily devour in this life what they must afterwards digest in hell. And many others, while they are still thirsting for filthy lucre, run headlong into instant destruction.

As thou considerest these things, O devout soul, avoid, as much as thou possibly canst, an avaricious spirit. Nothing of all thy worldly store canst thou carry with thee to the judgment-bar of God, except

what thou hast given away to the poor. Withhold not thy frail and perishing goods from the poor, for whom the blessed Christ refused not to give His life. Give to the poor, that thou mayest give to thyself; for what thou hast not thus given in Christian charity another will have. Far too avaricious is that man for whom the Lord Himself suffices not; nor has he a sure hope of heaven, who so highly values the perishing things of earth. How can he lay down his life for his brother (1 John iii. 16), who denies his brother the little temporal gifts he begs of him? What we place in the hands of a poor man we really lay up as a treasure in heaven, that it perish not on the earth. Wouldst thou offer a pleasing service to Christ thy Saviour? Show kindness to the poor. What we do to the members of His mystical body, Christ receives as done to Himself (Matt. xxv. 40). Christ is saying to thee: "Give to Me of that which I have given of Myself to thee; do good with the good thou hast, that thou mayest bring more good to thyself. Give bountifully of thine earthly possessions that thou mayest more truly preserve them; for by hoarding them as a miser thou wilt really lose them." Heed now the warning of Christ, that thou mayest not be obliged to hear Him saying to thee at the judgment: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; * * * for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat" (Matt. xxv. 41, 42). The giving of

alms is like sowing good seed ; and if thou sowest sparingly, thou shalt reap also sparingly ; if thou sowest bountifully, thou shalt reap also bountifully (I Cor. ix. 6 ; Gal. vi. 8). If thou wouldest be among those on the right hand of thy Lord on that great day, show the kindly spirit He commends in them. Let the sad fate of those on His left hand strike fear into thy heart, because they are there not for doing evil so much as for *not* doing good.

O God, “ incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness ” (Ps. cxix. 36) !

MEDITATION XXXVI.

TRUE CHARITY.

Love is the Seal of the Saint!

TRUE and sincere love is an unfailing characteristic of the godly soul. There is no Christian without faith, and no faith without love. When the heart glows not with love, there can be no true and fervent faith. Thou canst just as easily rob the sun of its light as separate love from faith. Love is an external exhibition of the real inward life of the Christian. The body without breath is dead, and so faith without love is dead (James ii. 26). “Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. viii. 9). And the man who exercises not the gift of love, has not the spirit of Christ, for the fruit of the spirit is love (Gal. v. 22). A good tree is known by its fruits (Matt. vii. 16). Love is the bond of Christian perfectness (Col. iii. 14). As the members of the human body are joined together in a living organism through the spirit, that is, the soul, so all the members of the mystical body of Christ are united by the bond of love through the

Holy Spirit. In Solomon's temple all things within and without were overlaid with pure gold; so in the spiritual temple of God all should be adorned with true love (1 Kings vi. 21). Let love move thy heart to compassion and thy hands to bountiful gifts; compassion alone is not enough, if it be unaccompanied with the gifts; nor will the gifts alone do, if thy heart go not with them. Faith receives all things from God; love, on the other hand, gives all its own to its neighbor. By faith we are made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter i. 4), but God is love (1 John iv. 16). Let no one think then that true faith dwells in the heart, whose love does not show itself in outward act. One who truly believes in Christ loves Him also, and thus loving Him, he will love his neighbor as well. And if a man refuse to render due and loving service to his neighbor, he evidently has not yet laid hold of Christ in true and hearty confidence. No deed is truly good that does not proceed from faith (Rom. xiv. 23); nor is it truly good if it does not also proceed from love, for love is the root of all virtues, and there is no good spiritual fruit but that which springs from this root of love. Love is the soul's spiritual relish; it alone extracts sweetness out of all the good, all the arduous, all the adverse, all the wearisome things of this life. It makes death even most blessedly sweet to the godly soul, "for love is strong as death" (Cant. viii. 6), nay,

even stronger than death, for love led our Lord Jesus Christ to die for us. Aye, love so inspires the souls of the pious that they do not hesitate to yield up their lives for the love of Christ. All that God does He does out of love, even when He punishes His children, and so all that the Christian does he should do out of a heart filled with love. In all the works of His hands God displays to us His love. The sun and the stars shine not for themselves, but for us; and the herbs of the field do not possess medicinal properties for their own sakes, but for us; the air, water, and all the brute creation, are subservient to man's highest interests. Go thou then and do likewise in ministering to thy neighbor.

Though thou hast the gift of tongues yet without love it profits thee nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 1), for this gift without love will simply puff thee up with pride, but love edifies (1 Cor. viii. 1). The gift to understand all mysteries without love profits thee nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 2), for these mysteries are known even to Satan, but love belongs only to the truly pious soul. Though thou hast all faith to remove mountains, yet without love thou art nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 2), for such faith works miracles but is not saving. Love is superior to the gift of working miracles; for the former is the indubitable mark of a true Christian, while the latter is imparted even to the ungodly. And though thou bestowest all thy goods to feed the poor, yet without love it

will profit thee nothing (1 Cor. xiii. 3); for the external act of charity is hypocritical if there be not true love in the heart. Rivers of benevolence profit nothing if they do not have their rise in the fountain of love. "Love suffereth long" (1 Cor. xiii. 4), for we are not easily angered with those whom we truly love. "Love is kind" (1 Cor. xiii. 4), for if one has already given his own heart, the very best gift of his soul, how can he refuse these lesser external gifts? "Love envieth not" (1 Cor. xiii. 4), because it looks upon another's good as its own. "Love vaunteth not itself" (1 Cor. xiii. 4), for no one easily injures one whom he truly and heartily loves. "Love is not puffed up" (1 Cor. xiii. 4), because by love we are all made members of one body, but one member does not prefer itself to another. "Love doth not behave itself unseemly" (1 Cor. xiii. 5), for only a wrathful man so acts, while true love curbs our wrath. "Love seeketh not her own" (1 Cor. xiii. 5), because love prefers the object of its love to itself, and seeks its advantage rather than its own. "Love is not easily provoked" (1 Cor. xiii. 5), for all anger springs from pride, while love in self-abasement casts itself down below others. "Love thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. xiii. 5), for if we are known to have evil designs against any one we give sure proof that we do not yet love him. "Love rejoiceth not in iniquity" (1 Cor. xiii. 6), because love makes the

misery of others its own. "Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 7), for what love desires for itself it does not refuse to others. "Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away" (1 Cor. xiii. 8), but any imperfections that inhere in it in this life shall all be removed in the future life, and then its very perfections shall be augmented. God directed that two altars should be erected in the ancient tabernacle, and fire was carried from the outer altar to the one within. God has also a two-fold Church, the Church militant upon earth, and the Church triumphant in heaven; and the fire of love that burns on the altar of the Church militant shall by and by be transferred to the altar of the Church triumphant above.

In view of all this, O devout soul, strive after a holy love; remember that whoever thy neighbor may be, Christ was willing to die for him (Rom. xiv. 15). Why then shouldst thou refuse thy love to him for whom Christ Himself hesitated not to die? If thou truly lovest God thou oughtest also to love one formed in His image. We are all one spiritual body (Eph. iv. 4); let us therefore be of one spiritual mind. It is not right that we who shall one day live together in heaven, should live at variance with each other here. Being of the

same mind in Christ, let us also have the same will in Him. We are all servants of the same Lord (Eph. iv. 5); it is not right then for us to be at variance among ourselves. A member of the body which does not participate in the suffering of its fellow-member must be dead; nor let that man regard himself as a true member of the mystical body of Christ, who does not sympathize with another suffering member. There is "one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv. 6), whom thou dost daily address as "Our Father," as Christ has taught us (Matt. vi. 9); now how will He recognize thee as His son, unless thou, on thy part, dost recognize His sons as thy brethren? Love a man commended to thee by God if he is worthy, on account of his worth; but if he is unworthy, love him at any rate, for the very reason that God who claims thy obedience is worthy. By loving thine enemy thou wilt show thyself a friend of God. Regard not what the man may do to thee, but what thou hast thus done to God. Regard not the injuries that thine enemy inflicts upon thee, but rather keep in mind the blessings which He confers upon thee who bids thee love thine enemy (Matt. v. 44). We are neighbors here on earth by virtue of our common human birth; we are brothers in the common possession of a hope of the heavenly inheritance. Let us then love one another.

Enkindle in our hearts, O God, the flame of love, by thy Holy Spirit!

MEDITATION XXXVII.

CHASTITY.

Christ's Mind is the Abode of Purity.

IF thou wouldst be a true disciple of Christ, thou shouldst cultivate a holy chastity. God, thy most indulgent heavenly Father, is of a pure and holy mind, and thou oughtest to call upon Him with prayers that come from a pure heart. A certain wise man* said that chastity of body and purity of spirit are the two keys of religion and happiness. If the body is not kept pure and chaste, it will scarcely be possible for the soul to glow with a holy fervor in prayer. "Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 19). We must guard it then with the greatest care, so that we defile not this dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. "Our members are the members of Christ" (1 Cor. vi. 15); we must take good heed, then, that we pollute not these members of Christ. Let us cling unto the Lord in faith and purity, that we may be one spirit

* The Chaldean Berossus.

with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17). The Sodomites burning with lust were struck by the Lord with blindness (Gen. xix. 11), a punishment that evidently affected both body and soul; and the same punishment is still meted out to the impure. The Lord rained brimstone and fire out of heaven and destroyed those lustful Sodomites (Gen. xix. 24); so shall God enkindle the lust that now burns in the heart of the lecher into an eternal flame; nor shall this fire ever be extinguished, but "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever" (Rev. xiv. 11). "Without are dogs" (Rev. xxii. 15); that is, outside the heavenly Jerusalem, and excluded from it are the impure and the lustful. Christ hath washed us in His own precious blood in the holy Sacrament of Baptism; and, oh, we must take the utmost care that we pollute not ourselves with un-holy lusts. A sense of natural shame makes un-godly men blush to commit these lustful sins in the sight of their fellowmen; but, alas! they blush not to commit them in the sight of God and of holy angels. No walls can conceal our deeds from the eyes of God, which glow with a light above that of the sun. No corners or recesses are so small as to exclude the presence of the holy angels. No retreat can secure us from the accusations of a guilty conscience. It is strange that the flames of wantonness should ascend, as it were, to the very heavens, whilst the stench of its foulness sinks to

the very depths of hell. Such brief and fleeting pleasure will be followed by eternal torment. The pleasure of lust is momentary, its torture is everlasting. Oh, let the memory of Him who was crucified for thee crucify thy sinful flesh within thee. Let the thought of the fires of hell extinguish the fires of unholy passion, and thy tears of penitence quench the flames of lust in thee. Let divine fear so control thy flesh that carnal love may not lead thee astray. Bear in mind that the desire of lust is full of trouble and madness, that the act itself is abominably disgraceful ; and that its consequences are shame and remorse. Look not upon the deceitful face of the devil inciting thee to lust, but think rather of the stings of conscience that will torment those who yield to him. Think not of the passing pleasure thou mayest enjoy, but rather of the lasting condemnation thou shalt suffer for sin. Cultivate a love for the knowledge found in the Holy Scriptures, and thou wilt not love the vices of the flesh. Always be busied with some work, that when the tempter approaches thee he may find thee fully occupied. David was led astray by him at a time when he was unoccupied (2 Sam. xi. 2); and Joseph on the contrary could not be led astray, because he was busily employed when the tempter came to him (Gen. xxxix. 9).

Remember that death is threatening thee every hour of thy life, and then thou wilt easily spurn all

carnal desires. Love temperance, and thou wilt easily overcome base passions. A stomach inflamed with wine speedily arouses lustful desires. Chastity is imperiled by luxurious living. If then thou pamperest thy body with luxuries, thou art nourishing within thyself an enemy that may destroy thy soul. Our flesh is to be so cared for that it may serve our highest welfare ; it must be so subdued as not to become proud. Keep in mind the terrors of the judgment, and thou wilt easily quench the fervor of lust. If the hidden things of our hearts shall be brought to light at the judgment (1 Cor. iv. 5), how much more then those things done in secret ! Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment (Matt. xii. 36) ; how much more then for our foul and unchaste words ! And if we must give account for these, how much more for our foul and unchaste deeds ! The accusation against thee there will be just as long as thy life has been here. Thine accusers there will be just as many as thy sins have been here. Those thoughts which have become bad by our familiar use of them will not go unexamined at the judgment. What advantage is there then in concealing thy sins of lust for awhile from the eyes of men, when after awhile at the judgment they must be brought to light before the assembled universe ? What advantage after all in escaping the tribunal of the earthly judge, since by no possi-

bility canst thou escape that of the Judge above? Thou canst not bribe that Judge, for He is most just; thou canst not then move Him by thy prayers, for He is very strict; thou canst not then escape His province or jurisdiction, for He is all-powerful; nor canst thou deceive Him with vain excuses, for He is all-wise; nor canst thou appeal from the sentence He pronounces upon thee, for He is the Supreme Judge. His judgment will be according to the truth; it will be publicly proclaimed; it will be executed with the strictest severity.

Therefore, O my soul, devoted to God, let the terrors of this awful Judge be continually before thine eyes, so thou shalt not be led astray by the fire of lust. Be as the fragrant rose in thy love, as the lowly violet in thy humility, as the spotless lily in thy chastity. Learn of Christ (Matt. xi. 29), thy spiritual Spouse, humility and purity of life. Great is the dignity of chastity, because it was consecrated in the body of Christ; great is its dignity also, because it helps us while living in the flesh to live above the flesh. As there is nothing baser than to live under the dominion of the flesh, so there is nothing more glorious than to live with the flesh in entire subjection to us. Not only must we avoid external acts of lust, but impure thoughts as well, because God judgeth not only our external acts, but also the secret thoughts of our hearts. We may often do violence to our piety by a sinful look

simply, and to our chastity by the lust of the eye. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). How difficult may be the struggle in this respect, but, oh, how glorious will be the victory! It *is* difficult to restrain the fires of lust; it excites the young, it inflames the youth, it wearies the old and decrepit, it spurns not the hut of the poor, it respects not the palace of the rich. But the more difficult the struggle, the more glorious will be the final victory! The very first impulses to impurity must be at once checked, nor must we add fuel to the flame by indulging in evil thoughts. Although the Apostle bids us struggle against all other vices, yet in respect of this sin he enjoins upon us not to fight it, but to flee from it. "Flee fornication" (1 Cor. vi. 18), he says. If a strange beggar comes to our doors, with feigned simplicity of manner for the sake of imposing upon us, and we refuse him admittance, he goes away; but if we admit him to our home, he becomes our guest, he gradually grows bolder and more presumptuous, until at length, if we allow him, he becomes our master; and so unholy passion assails us; if we give it no encouragement it speedily withdraws. If thou wouldest not have this hated enemy rule thee, receive it not into the home of thy heart.

Preserve us, O God, in holiness of mind and in purity of body!

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

THE TRANSITORINESS OF LIFE.

What is Human Life?

CONSIDER, O devout soul, the misery and the transitoriness of this present life, that thou mayst lift up thy heart more longingly towards thy heavenly inheritance. Whilst the past of our life here increases, its future decreases ; while it is growing in length of years, it is at the same time becoming shorter ; whatever is added to it, is at the same time subtracted from it. The life we live is a mere point of time, aye, it is even less than that. While we turn us around, our immortality is upon us. In this life we dwell as in a strange home. Abraham had no spot in the land of Canaan for a dwelling-place, only a sepulchre, where he might bury his dead (Gen. xxiii. 4) ; so this present life affords us as it were a lodging where we may sojourn for a time, and then a place of burial. As soon as life begins, we begin to die. Like one on board a vessel, who, whether he sits, or stands, or lies down, is always drawing nearer his port, carried

thither with the same force with which his ship is driven; so we, sleeping or waking, lying down or walking along, willingly or unwillingly, moment by moment are always being borne along irresistibly towards our end. This life is indeed more like death, for day by day we are dying, since every day we live is for us one day less of life. It is filled with painful regrets for the past, with trying labors in the present, and with dismal fears for the future. We enter upon life's journey weeping, ushered into the world as an infant in tears, as though foreseeing the ills that shall befall us here. Every step onward is one of weakness, afflicted as we are with many diseases, and distressed with many cares. Our departure hence is fraught with gloomy fears, for we go not alone, but carry with us the burden of all the deeds (Rev. xiv. 13) done in the body, and through death we approach the awful judgment-seat of God (Heb. ix. 27). We are conceived in sin, in misery are we born, our life is a constant pain, and death is a source of distress. We are begotten in uncleanness, we are cherished in darkness, we are brought forth in pain. Before our birth we burden our wretched mothers, and at our birth we lacerate them as with a viper's fang; we are strangers at our birth, and mere pilgrims and sojourners whilst we live, because in death we are obliged to move on. In the first portion of our life we know not ourselves; in the midst of it we are over-

whelmed with cares, and its closing period is oppressed with the burdens of old age. The whole of life is divided into the present, the past and the future. If we consider the present, it is unstable ; if the past, it is already become as nothing ; if the future, it is uncertain. At our birth we are as a mass of uncleanness ; our whole life is but a bubble ; and at our death we furnish a repast to worms. We carry earth about with us, we tread upon the earth as we walk, and by and by our bodies will become earth again. The necessity of being born was laid upon us ; and so also the misery of living, and the hardship of dying. Our body is an earthly habitation for death and sin, which day by day consume it.

Our whole life is a spiritual warfare (Job vii. 1) ; above us are demons watching for our destruction ; on our right hand and on our left the world is assailing us ; and below us and within us the flesh lies in wait to destroy us. Man's life is a warfare, because "the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh" (Gal. v. 17). What joy can we therefore find in this life, since there is no certain and secure happiness in it ? What delight can we take in the things of the present, when, whilst all else is passing away, that which constantly threatens us does not pass away ; when the objects of our love here are so soon ended, and we are constantly approaching nearer that place where

pain is never ended? About all we gain from a longer life is that we do more evil, we see more evil, we suffer more evil, and at the last judgment a longer list of accusing sins rises up to condemn us. What is man? Well, he is death's purchased possession, a transient traveler; his life is lighter than a bubble, briefer than a moment, more worthless than an image, more empty than a sound, more fragile than glass, more changeable than the wind, more fleeting than a shadow, more deceptive than a dream. What is this life? Why, it is a constant looking forward to death, a stage upon which a farce is enacted; a vast sea of miseries, a single little measure of blood, which a slight accident may spill, or a little fever corrupt. The course of life is a labyrinth which we enter at birth, and from which we withdraw by the portals of death. We are but as dust, and dust is nothing but smoke, and smoke is nothing at all, and so we are nothing. This life, like glass, is easily broken; like a river, it flows swiftly along in its course; like a warfare, it is attended with constant misery, and yet to many it appears so very desirable. A nut may outwardly appear good and sound, but open it with a knife and you may find nothing but worms and putridity within. Apples of Sodom may delight us with their exterior beauty, but touch them and they fall into ashes. And so it is with life. Its external promises of happiness en-

chant us, but come closer, and these promises will prove to be but as smoke and ashes.

Do not, therefore, O beloved soul, devote thy highest thoughts to this life, but rather, in mind, aspire to the joys of that life which is to come. Contrast the very brief space of time allotted us in this life with the infinite and never-ending ages of eternity, and it will sufficiently appear how foolish it is for us to cling to this fleeting life to the neglect of that eternal life. Our life here is transitory, and yet in this brief life we either win or lose eternal life; it is filled with pain and misery, and yet in it we either win or lose the eternal happiness of heaven; it is full of dire calamities, and yet in it we either win or lose eternal joys. If then thou dost aspire to eternal life, desire it with thy whole heart in this fleeting life. Use this world wisely, but, oh, set not thy heart upon it! Carry on thy temporal business in this life, but, oh, let not thy mind be fixed upon this life. Using the things of this world will not harm us, if we set not our hearts upon them. This world is simply thy lodging-place, but heaven is thy fatherland; do not then take such delight in thy daily sojourn in this earthly lodging-place, that thou wilt abate for a moment thy longing desires for the heavenly fatherland. In this life we are sailing on the sea of time to eternity, our port; do not be so charmed with a momentary tranquillity on this sea, that thou wilt

not ardently long for that haven of rest that is tranquil for ever and ever. This life is like an inconstant lover, and does not keep faith with those that love it, but contrary to their expectation it frequently flees from them; why, then, wouldst thou put thy trust in it? It is very dangerous to promise ourselves the security of even one hour, for very frequently in that one brief hour this fleeting life comes to a sudden end. It is the safest plan to be on the lookout for death every hour, and to prepare for it by serious repentance of our sins. In the gourd whose shade so delighted Jonah, God prepared a worm when the morning rose, and it smote the gourd that it withered (Jonah iv. 7); so in these worldly objects, upon which so many set their hearts, there is no stability, but worms of corruption are bred in them to destroy them. The world has already been wasted and defaced by so many calamities, that it has even lost some of its seductive charms; and as we should heartily praise and commend those who deign not to delight themselves with a delightsome world, so we should strongly reprove and condemn those who take pleasure in perishing with a perishing world.

O blessed Christ, withdraw Thou our hearts from the love of this world, and enkindle in us holy desires for the heavenly kingdom!

MEDITATION XXXIX.

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.

The Eternal Transcends the Temporal.

Do not, O my soul, set thine affections upon things that are upon the earth. For “the world passeth away” (1 John ii. 17; 1 Cor. vii. 31); “and all the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. iii. 10); where then will be thy love? Love the good that is eternal, that thou mayest live the life that is eternal! Every creature was made subject to vanity (Rom. viii. 20); if therefore thou lovest the creature, thou thyself shalt be made subject to vanity. Love that which is truly and lastingly good, that thy heart may enjoy lasting peace and rest.

Why do the honors of this world delight thee? If we seek honor of men, we cannot receive honor of God (John v. 44); and in seeking worldly honor we must conform ourselves to this world, but if we seek to please men we cannot please God (Gal. i. 10). That which is produced by the transitory and unstable is itself transitory and unstable, and hence

worldly honor cannot be stable. One may be exalted to the height of worldly glory to-day, and sunk to the lowest depths of ignominy to-morrow. Seek to please God, that He may confer upon thee His true and lasting honor. After all, what real advantage is there in being esteemed great and honorable among men? A man is really great and honorable only as he is so esteemed by the great God Himself. When the people would have made Christ a king He fled from them (John vi. 15); but when they sought Him to put Him to a shameful and ignominious death upon the cross, He freely and voluntarily offered Himself. If thou wouldest then become more and more conformed to Christ, take more satisfaction in the shame the world heaps upon thee, than in the empty glories it offers thee. If thou canst not lightly esteem the honors of this world for the sake of Christ, thy Saviour, how couldst thou rise to that point of love that thou wouldest pour out thy life for Him? There is no other path to the attainment of true glory with Christ than through a holy contempt for worldly glory, just as Christ Himself through the ignominy of the cross entered into His glory (Luke xxiv. 26). Therefore choose rather to be despised, to be lightly esteemed, to be scorned in this world, that thou mayst be honored of God in the world that is to come. Christ has plainly taught us what estimate we ought to place upon the glory of this world; all

the glory of the heavenly world was His own and waited upon Him ; aye, He Himself is true glory, and yet He emptied Himself of all His glory and for a time voluntarily cast it from Him. The more worldly honor one enjoys, the more abundantly he is supplied with the material comforts of this world, the more profoundly and heartily ought he to be saddened by it, seeing that in all this he is just so much farther from conformity to Christ. How vain are the world's plaudits, if we carry about within us a guilty and accusing conscience ! What advantage is it to a man intensely suffering from a burning fever that he lies upon an ivory couch ? The testimony of a good conscience—that is true honor, that is true praise. Thou canst have no juster or more impartial judge of thy deeds than thy God and thy conscience. Let it be thine aim and desire to bring all thy deeds to the test of this holy judgment. Is it not satisfaction enough for thee that thou art known to thyself, and what is best of all, to God ?

But coming now to riches, why dost thou so greatly desire them ? Far too avaricious is he for whom the Lord suffices not ! This life is the pathway to our heavenly fatherland ; of what advantage then is great wealth ? It simply burdens the Christian pilgrim as a vast cargo does a ship. Christ, the King of heaven, is riches enough for the true servants of God. A real treasure ought to be something within a man, not without him,

and a something that thou canst carry with thee to the universal judgment; but all these external, material possessions must be laid aside by thee at death. All these heaps of riches shall one day perish; but he who has heaped them up shall perish in a still worse manner, if he has not been rich toward God. Naked and poor thou camest into the world; and naked and poor shalt thou go out of it (Job i. 21); why then should the middle portion of thy life be so different from its beginning and its end? We ought to value riches for the use we can make of them, and how little will they then suffice us? The most insignificant gifts of grace and virtue are far more valuable than all earthly riches, and why? Simply because with grace and virtue we may please God, whilst with riches alone, apart from these, we cannot please Him. We ought to be more pleased with the facts of Christ's poverty than with the riches of all the world, because Christ has thus sanctified poverty for us. He was poor at his birth, poorer during His life, and poorest of all at His death. Why shouldst thou hesitate to prefer this world's poverty to its riches, since Christ preferred it to the riches of His heavenly kingdom? How wilt thou trust thy soul to God, if thou dost not commit the care of thy body to Him? How wilt thou lay down thy life for thy brother, if thou art not willing to lay out thy riches for him? Riches are acquired with great

difficulty and labor ; they are held in possession in constant fear, and their loss occasions great pain, and what is still more to be deplored, all the labor of the avaricious man in acquiring his wealth will not only come to naught, but will be deadly in its effects upon his soul, according to the teaching of St. Bernard. Thy love is thy God ; "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. vi. 21) ; if thou lovest these material, earthly, perish-
ing riches, thou canst not love those higher spiritual, heavenly, eternal riches. Why ? Because those weigh upon a man's heart as a heavy burden, and drag it down to the earth , whilst these lift it up towards heaven. The love of earthly things is a sort of weight upon the wings of our souls, said a certain ancient lover of Christ.¹ The solemn example of Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. xix. 26), warns us not to look back to our worldly possessions, but to direct our way towards our heavenly home. The apostles left all and followed Christ (Matt. iv. 22) ; because their knowledge of the true riches which Christ could give, took away their desire for riches falsely so-called. If we once taste of spiritual things, carnal things become tasteless to our souls ; he who truly loves Christ cares little for the world.

But why dost thou so greatly desire worldly pleasure ? Oh, let the memory of Him who was

¹St. Augustine.

crucified for thee crucify in thee all desire for mere pleasure. Let the thought of the fires of hell quench in thee all the ardor of lust. Contrast these pleasures, which are but for a brief moment, with eternal torments. Fleshly pleasure is beastly, and renders all who indulge in it beastly. He has no taste for the delightsome repasts of the heavenly kingdom who fills himself daily with swine's husks. Let us then mortify our sensual pleasures, and with Abraham (Gen. xxii. 10), offer up in spiritual sacrifice our beloved son, that is, figuratively, those delights of our souls especially dear to us, by renouncing voluntarily all worldly pleasure, and cheerfully accepting the hardships of the holy cross. Oh! the way to the heavenly kingdom is not smooth and level and strewn with roses, but it is rough and rugged and beset with thorns. The outward man may flourish in worldly pleasures, but the inward man grows spiritually by bearing his cross and in suffering tribulations; and in proportion as the outward man flourishes the inward man droops. Pleasures minister to our bodies, but to the godly man the care of his body is his least concern, while the care of his soul is his greatest. Pleasures lead captive our hearts so that they cannot freely love God. It is not these pleasures, but a certain loathing of them, that thou wilt carry away with thee at death, and bear with thee to the awful judgment bar of God. Let the fear of God

so pierce thy flesh that carnal love may not lead thee astray. Oh, let the thought of God's judgment be so continually in thy mind, that thine own perverse will may not bring thee into captivity to thy sensual appetites. Look not upon the face of the tempter alluring thee to sin, but think rather of the bitter stings of an accusing conscience that shall follow that sin. Overcome sin and temptation by the grace of Christ, and finally thou shalt be crowned a victor by Christ Jesus Himself.

MEDITATION XL.

THE ADVANTAGES OF TEMPTATIONS.

The Palm Tree Grows Upward in Spite of Weights and Hindrances.

IT is very profitable to the faithful soul to be tested and confirmed in the faith by temptations, whilst tarrying in this world. Our Saviour Himself was willing to wrestle with the devil in His temptation in the wilderness, in order that He might overcome him for us and for our salvation, and thus be our faithful Champion in all our conflicts with the tempter. Before He ascended to heaven He descended into hell as its Conqueror, and so the faithful soul must first descend into the very lowest depths of temptation, before ever it can ascend to the glories of heaven. The children of Israel could not fully occupy the promised land of Canaan, until their various enemies were first conquered; and thus the faithful soul may not comfort itself with the promise of entering into the glories of the heavenly kingdom, until it has first gained the victory over its enemies—the world, the flesh,

and the devil. Temptation tests, purifies and illuminates the soul.

Temptation tests the soul, because our faith assailed by storms of adversity strikes its roots more firmly down into the very bed-rock of our salvation; it spreads out its branches more widely in good works, and shoots up higher and higher in its hope of the glorious liberty of the children of God. When Abraham, bidden by God Himself to offer up his son in sacrifice, had given full proof of his prompt and cheerful obedience, the angel of the Lord appears to him saying, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me" (Gen. xxii. 12). And so if thou, in thy temptations, offerest up to God in sacrifice thine own will and desires, thou too wilt be counted as one that feareth God, and in thine inmost heart thou wilt hear the divine word of approval. As fire tests the gold, so temptation tests thy faith. The battle shows the temper of the soldier, so temptation shows the strength of thy faith. When the boisterous winds beat against the boat that carried Christ, and the foaming bilows dashed into it, then appeared the little faith of His disciples. When the Lord directed that the Israelites should be led out to overcome the Midianites, they were first taken down to the water and tested there (Judges vii. 4); and so are we to be tested in the water of tribulation and temptation,

ere we, with all our enemies laid low before us, shall be led triumphantly into our heavenly fatherland. Whatever adversities then, whatever temptations, the faithful soul here suffers, let them be regarded not as a mark that God is reproving us for our sins, but rather that He is proving our faith.

Temptation also purifies our souls. Our great Physician, Christ, employs many bitter remedies to expel the malignant spiritual diseases of love of self and love of the world. Tribulation excites us to a careful examination of our consciences, and often vividly recalls the sins of our past lives; nay more, it frequently preserves us from the commission of sin, as certain medicines act as a preventative of contagious bodily diseases. We are prone to fall into sin at all times, and yet more so in times of prosperity than of adversity. To many riches are as thorns (Matt. xiii. 22) that spring up and choke the good seed sown in their hearts. God, therefore, takes them away, lest they may destroy the soul. A multitude of worldly business cares hinder many from rendering due obedience to God; and so He often lays them upon a sick bed, that they may have time to turn their thoughts in upon themselves, and thus begin to die to the world, that they may live unto Him. To very many it has been a great blessing to have fallen from an exalted station of wealth or of honor to the

comparative quiet of a more obscure lot in life. Worldly honor puffs up many with pride; and so God often sends reproach, and removes that which feeds this worldly pride.

Finally, temptation illuminates the soul. How imperfect and worthless is all worldly consolation, we come to recognize only in time of temptation. While Stephen was being stoned to death he saw the glory of Christ (Acts vii. 55), and so Christ shows himself to the truly contrite soul in the hour of its sorest trouble. It is only as God Himself dwells in us that we may have true and lasting joy, and God dwells with him that is of a contrite, humble spirit (Is. lvii. 15). Affliction as a severe test of our faith serves to make our spirits humble and contrite, so that the souls of the afflicted may greatly rejoice in all their afflictions. Through temptation we come to know God more truly and intimately, for the Lord Himself says, "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him" (Ps. xci. 15). Blind Tobias saw nothing above him, below him, in front of him, not even himself ; but illuminated by God through the Angel Raphael, he clearly saw all those things that he could not see before, using no other remedy than the gall of a fish, thus teaching us that our eyes are to be anointed and illuminated by the gall of bitterness before we shall attain to a true knowledge of ourselves and of the world. Why does the

Apostle say—"For now we see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12)? Because in temptation and trial we learn to know that God brings joy to the hearts of His elect children in a way that seems to betoken only sadness; that He makes them spiritually alive by apparently putting them to death; that He heals them spiritually by allowing them to be subjected to various diseases, and makes them rich in spirit by keeping them poor in this world's goods. Hence, we ought cheerfully accept the cross and temptation in grateful appreciation of the love of Christ, who was tempted, and tried, and suffered on the cross for us.

O blessed Jesus, let me pass through fiery trials here; let me be bitterly persecuted, even, in this world, if Thou wilt only spare me in the world that is to come. O blessed Jesus, who dost often spare us by apparently casting us away from Thee, grant that by Thy merciful stripes upon us we may be brought back again to Thee. Afflict and chastise the outward man, if Thou wilt, if only the inward man may thus grow in strength and power. O merciful Jesus, be Thou with me to help me in all my conflicts with myself; direct me in my struggles, and crown me with glorious victory. Whatever adversities I may suffer in this life, let them serve to quicken and increase my faith. Strengthen my feeble faith, O blessed Jesus, for so hast Thou promised to do by Thy holy prophet,

"As a mother comforteth her children, so will I comfort you" (Is. lxvi. 13). As a mother cherishes and nourishes with more tender and anxious care her new-born infant because of its very helplessness, so, O merciful Jesus, encourage and strengthen my soul because of the very weakness and feebleness of my faith. Grant that the inward consolations of Thy grace may have more influence and power upon me than all the contradictions of ungodly men and of the devil himself. O Jesus, do Thou, who art indeed the Good Samaritan, pour into the gaping wounds of my sins the stinging wine of Thy just judgments, but at the same time, also, add the soothing oil of Thy divine consolations. Increase the burden of the cross I already bear, if Thou wilt, but grant me also the strength to bear it.

MEDITATION XLI.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN PATIENCE.

Patience will triumph at last.

REST in the Lord, O devout soul, and bear patiently the cross imposed upon thee by God. Meditate upon the awful passion of Christ, thy spiritual Spouse. He suffered in behalf of all, He suffered at the hands of all, He suffered in all things. He suffered for all, even for those who despised His Holy passion and trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, counting it an unholy thing (Heb. x. 29). He suffered at the hands of all. He is delivered up (Rom. viii. 32), He is stricken (Is. liii. 4, 5), He is forsaken (Matt. xxvii. 46) by His heavenly Father, He is deserted by the disciples whom He loved (Matt. xxvi. 56), He is rejected by the Jews, His own peculiar people (Matt. xxvii. 21, 22), who chose the robber Barabbas instead of Himself. He is crucified by the Gentiles, He bore the sins of all mankind, and so the whole race was concerned in the guilt of His death. He suffered, also, in every conceivable way. His soul was ex-

ceeding sorrowful even unto death (Matt. xxvi. 38); and, overwhelmed with a sense of the divine judgment, He cried out on the cross that He was forsaken of God (Matt. xxvii. 46). His body sweat, as it were, drops of blood (Luke xxii. 44); His head is crowned with thorns; His lips taste the bitter myrrh; His hands and His feet are pierced with nails (Ps. xxii. 17); His side is lacerated with the spear; His whole body is scourged and stretched upon the cross. Ah! He suffered hunger, thirst, cold, contempt, poverty, insult, wounds, and the awful death of the cross. But oh, how unseemly it would be that the Lord should suffer thus, while the servant lives in undisturbed joy! Oh, how unseemly it would be that our Saviour should be severely punished for our sins, and we should continue to take delight in them! How unjust it would be that the head of the body should be afflicted, and the rest of the members should not suffer with it! Nay, rather, as it behooved Christ to suffer, and thus to enter into His heavenly glory (Luke xxiv. 26), so also we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts xiv. 22).

Think of the inconceivable reward held out to thee. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). Whatever our suffering may be here, it

is only for a time—nay, it is sometimes but for a day—but the glory that awaits us is forever and ever. God knows perfectly all our adversities, and some day He will bring them all into judgment (Ecc. xii. 14). Oh, how distressing it will be for us to appear in that august gathering of all the universe without the ornaments of the cross and of our sufferings for Christ upon us. “And God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Is. xxv. 8; Rev. vii. 17; xxi. 4). O happy tears, which such a hand of such a Lord shall wipe away! O blessed cross, that shall in heaven be exchanged for such a reward! Scarce ten years did King David spend in exile, but for forty he ruled in his kingdom (2 Sam. v. 5). Here we may see prefigured the brevity of our life of suffering, and the unending glory which is to follow. ’Tis but a mere point of time after all in which the saints of God, often objects of the world’s pity, suffer the hardships of the cross; for “weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Ps. xxx. 5).

Consider, moreover, the tribulation which the saints of the past have endured. Behold the patriarch Job, “as he sat down among the ashes” to weep (Job ii. 8); John the Baptist fasting in the wilderness (Luke iii. 2); Peter extended upon a cross, and James beheaded by the sword of Herod (Acts xii. 2). Think of Mary, the blessed mother

of our Saviour, standing with pierced heart under the cross (John xix. 25), who in some sense becomes a type of Christ's Church, the spiritual mother of our Lord. "Blessed are ye," says Christ, "when men shall persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake, * * for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. v. 11, 12). O glorious persecutions, which link us to the apostles and prophets, and to all the saints, aye to our blessed Christ Himself. Let us patiently suffer then with the saints of God, who have suffered in His cause; let us even rejoice to be crucified with those who have been crucified, that we may at last be glorified with those who have been glorified. If we are indeed sons of God, let us not refuse to share the portion of the rest of His children. If we truly desire to be heirs of God, let us joyfully accept all that heirship involves. But let us remember that as sons of God we are heirs not only of the joy and glory of the future life, but also of the sorrow and of the suffering of this present life, for "God scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6). He punishes our sins here that He may spare us punishment in the day of judgment; He lays tribulation after tribulation upon us here, that there He may bestow upon us an exceeding weight of glory; and, indeed, the reward far exceeds, in proportion, the persecutions we suffer here.

But consider the blessed advantages of the cross. It destroys the roots of worldly love in us, and implants the love of God in our heart. The cross begets within us a hatred of the world, and lifts up our minds to the contemplation of things heavenly and divine. If we mortify the deeds of the flesh, the Holy Spirit lives within us; and as the world becomes bitter to our souls, Christ becomes sweeter and sweeter. Greater, indeed, are the mysterious influences and blessing of the cross, since by it God calls us to contrition for our sins, to a true and holy fear of Himself, and to the exercise of patience. When the Lord stands at our heart's door and knocks, let us open to Him, and hear what He shall speak in our souls. Oh, the world and the carnal outward man may look with contempt upon the cross, but to God and in the eyes of the inward spiritual man it is glorious. What could be more abject and despicable than the passion of Christ, our Saviour, in the eyes of the Jews; and yet what could be more glorious and precious than that same passion of Christ in the eyes of God; since this is the price He paid for the atonement of the sins of the whole world (1 John ii. 2)? And so the righteous man is afflicted: "The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart" (Is. lvii. 1); but how precious is the cross,—"precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. cxvi. 15). The Church, the bride of Christ, is

black without (Cant. i. 5), because of her afflictions and persecutions; but within she is comely and beautiful, because she enjoys the consolations of the divine Spirit. The Church is as a garden enclosed (Cant. iv. 12), and so is every faithful soul, since no one knows its beauty unless he is within it. And never shall we know fully and perfectly the consolations of the Spirit of God, unless the power of the flesh over us is destroyed by affliction. If the love of the world fills our hearts, then the love of God can find no entrance therein. A vessel already full cannot be filled with some new liquid unless it be first emptied. Let us therefore empty our hearts of the love of the world, that we may fill them with the love of God. So God, in sending the cross, seeks to destroy the love of the world in us, that the divine love may find place in our heart. The cross, moreover, leads us to prayer, and becomes the occasion for the exercise in us of Christian virtues. When the north wind blows upon the garden, its spices flow out (Cant. iv. 16), and when persecutions sweep over the Church then are developed those peculiar graces and virtues which are so pleasing to God. The beloved Bridegroom of the soul is white and ruddy (Cant. v. 10); white in His holy innocence, ruddy in the blood-marks of His passion; and that the beloved bride of Christ may be made pure and white in her virtues, she is made ruddy by her sufferings for His name's sake.

From the hardest stone of our afflictions divine grace can bring forth oil and honey, and from the bitter root of present suffering the sweetest fruit of eternal glory.

And to this eternal glory, O Lord Jesus, lead us on and on, and to its blissful enjoyment finally bring us! Amen.

MEDITATION XLII.

PERSEVERANCE IN OVERCOMING TEMPTATION.

A hope fixed in God will never fail us.

O HOLY Lord Jesus, Thou blessed Bridegroom of my soul, when wilt Thou lead me into the solemnities of Thy nuptials, the marriage-supper of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7)? A sojourner am I upon the earth, and exiled from Thee, yet most firmly do I believe, doubting nothing, that ere long, released from the fetters of the body, I shall appear before Thy face (Ps. xvii. 15). “Fear and trembling are come upon me” (Ps. lv. 6), because I carry my treasure in earthen vessels (2 Cor. iv. 7). Prone is my mind to error, prone is my will to sin, so that I cannot even say that the spirit is always willing (Matt. xxvi. 41), though the flesh is always weak; sin hath taken me captive, and the law of my members wars against the law of my mind (Rom. vi. 23). Fear and trembling are come upon me because Satan is continually plotting against my treasure; to extreme cunning he adds an intense desire to work my ruin, and the greatest power.

Adam he deceived in paradise (Gen. iii.); Judas, under the instruction of our Saviour Himself (John xiii. 27); how can I, a poor miserable sinner, hope to be secure from his insidious arts? Fear and trembling are come upon me because I am still in this world, and this “whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John v. 19). The delights of the world tempt me, difficulties in the way of the Lord terrify me, the allurements of the world charm me, the whole world is full of snares to entangle my unwary feet; unhappy man that I am, how can I escape? Even my joys dispute my advance in the Christian life; sorrow opposes my way; O, wretched man that I am, how shall I be able to stand? Fear and trembling are come upon me because it is God who worketh in me both to will and to do (Phil. ii. 13). I fear lest my sinful negligence and carelessness should lead God in holy indignation to take His good-will from me which He hath given me. So unworthily do I use the remission of sins He has granted me, and so disdainfully do I treat His first proffers of grace to me, that I greatly fear lest by a secret and righteous judgment of God I shall be deservedly deprived of that which I have so unworthily used. I tremble lest I may be deserted by Him, whom I time and again since my conversion have so shamefully deserted. What anguish does the thought give me that a heavier and severer judgment may follow these great benefits the Lord

has conferred upon me, if it shall appear that I have abused them. And yet I am comforted by the thought of the infinite mercy of God, who, as He has given me the power to will, will give me, also, the power to do, for He is a God that changeth not (Mal. iii. 6); "His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth forever" (Ps. cxvii. 2). "The foundation of the Lord standeth sure" (2 Tim. ii. 19). Certainly it standeth sure, because it is in God Himself, with whom is no variableness; and because it is confirmed by the blood of Christ, which ever speaks with eloquent voice before the throne of God (Heb. xii. 24), and because it is securely sealed to us in the holy sacraments which He has instituted.

If I should seek for some grounds of salvation, however small, in myself, I would certainly be obliged to doubt of my salvation; but as I am justified solely for Christ's sake, so my hopes of salvation are grounded only in Him. If I had laid hold on Christ as my Saviour by a free exercise of my own will, unassisted by divine grace, then would I have cause to fear greatly, that by a change of my fickle will I might also lose Christ; but since Christ has been found by me who sought not for Him, surely after He has thus been found, He will not withdraw Himself from me. Surely, He who hath led me out of the very shadow of death (Luke i. 79) into His marvelous

light and liberty, will not allow me to be forced back into the awful darkness that formerly enveloped my soul. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom xi. 29), so far as God's will is concerned; and oh, that I might be just as unchangeable in my holy desires and purposes! The treasury of divine grace and blessing is always at hand, but oh, how languid and weak oftentimes becomes the hand of faith to lay hold of its gifts! But I shall be able fully to apprehend Christ, for I know that, inasmuch as He has revealed Himself to me in His word and promises, He will most mercifully grant me grace to rest confidently in His word and promises. I will guard my faith by a use of all the supports and comforts and defences of earnest prayer, and like Jacob of old (Gen. xxxii. 26), I will not let the Lord go until He bless me with His salvation. By the power of God it is possible for me to be kept unto eternal salvation (1 Pet. i. 5); this power of God cheers and comforts my soul, whilst the thought of my own weakness oppresses and saddens me. And the Lord's "strength shall be made perfect in my weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9); ah! He will strengthen me, from whom alone cometh all strength of faith. The grace of God cheers my heart, whilst my own unworthiness in His sight terrifies me. And yet, if I were worthy in myself, my salvation would not be of grace but of merit

(Rom. i. 6); and if it be of works, it surely can not be of grace. For grace is not grace at all, unless it is altogether and entirely gratuitous. And so I look not upon my works for any ground of salvation; what is wrong in them God will correct; what is lacking He will graciously supply; what is sinful He will mercifully blot out. What He will not impute to me is just as if it had never been. And hence only as my salvation is of God is it sure and unchangeable.

MEDITATION XLIII.

THE DAILY CONSIDERATION OF DEATH

To Meditate upon Death is Life.

O FAITHFUL soul, be thou ready for the approach of death at any hour, for every hour death is lying in wait for thee. In the morning when thou arisest from thy couch, think that this perchance may be the last day of life for thee; and in the evening hour when thou liest down to sleep, think that this night may be thy last upon the earth. Whatever thou doest, or whatever thou dost contemplate doing, always consider beforehand whether thou wouldst do it if thou knewest that this very hour thou shouldst die, and be summoned to the judgment bar of God. Dost thou suppose, that simply because thou art not always mindful of death, it is not all the time coming nearer and nearer to thee? Or dost thou suppose that thou wilt summon it the sooner by thinking of it? Whether thou thinkest of it or not, whether thou speakest of it or not, death is always threatening thee. Life has been given not as an absolute possession, but as a loan

in trust; as thou hast come into the world, so shalt thou leave it; naked camest thou hither, naked shalt depart hence (*Job i. 21*). Life is a pilgrimage, and after thou hast walked about here and there in this world for a time, thou must at length return to God. Thou dwellest in this world merely as a tenant, a sojourner, not as a master in perpetual possession. Every hour consider whither thou art moment by moment so rapidly hastening.

We deceive ourselves sadly if we think of death only as taking place with the last breath of life here; on the contrary, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, we are dying. Step by step the future of life approaches us, and at the same time, step by step death advances towards us. And every moment added to life is at the same time a moment subtracted from it. Death really never comes suddenly, but we always approach it gradually, step by step. This life of ours is a path upon which we journey; every day we complete a part of it; life and death seem to be far distant from each other, when in fact they are as near as possible to each other. Life is always gliding along as if on swift wing, while death is ever hovering near to strike us down. Like voyagers on the ocean, who are coming nearer and nearer to port, although as they are being borne along swiftly by the vessel, they often feel it not or think not of it, so on the voyage of life, whatever we do, whether we eat,

or drink, or sleep, we are always coming nearer and nearer to death. Many have passed through life seeking only the means and the supplies to support it.

No one can cheerfully meet death unless he has for a long time been looking forward to it with calm composure. Die daily to thyself whilst thou art living, so that when thou diest thou mayest live with God. Before thou diest, let thy sins die in thee; in thy life let the old Adam die in thee, so in thy death Christ shall live in thee; in thy life let thine outward man perish day by day, so in thy death the inward man shall be renewed in thee. Death simply transfers us from time to eternity as we are, for "where the tree falleth, there it shall be" (Ecc. xi. 3). How anxiously then ought we to consider the hour of death! Time is quickly passing, and the infinite reaches of eternal ages stretch out before us; in time then prepare thyself for eternity! What shall be our portion in eternity, whether the blessedness of the redeemed or the torments of the lost, is determined in that one hour of death; aye, in that single moment, eternal happiness is either won or lost. What careful and anxious preparation, O faithful soul, oughtest thou make for the hour of thy death! It will not be hard to think lightly of all these perishing earthly things, if thou art constantly mindful of thy mortality. Just think of thine eyes becoming obscured

in the darkness of death, and thou wilt easily "turn them away from beholding vanity" (Ps. cxix. 37); think how thine ears will become deaf in death, and easy will it then be for thee to close them to all ungodly and impure words; think of thy tongue stiffening in death, and surely thou wilt be more careful of thy vain prattle. Consider the struggles and agonies of the death hour, so wilt thou easily despise worldly delights; consider how all who depart hence must lay aside all their possessions, and then poverty here will not seem so grievous to thee. Think of how ghastly the whole body becomes in the embrace of death, and then the splendors and glories of this world will not so attract thee. Behold with what grief and wailing the soul is driven from its home in the body, and thou wilt the more easily avoid the guilt of sin. Think how thy poor body will yield to corruption in the grave, and little difficulty wilt thou have in humbling the disposition to pride, so manifest in thy flesh. In death thou shalt be left alone, bereft of all creature comforts and companionships; consider this, and then thou canst easily turn thy love from them to thy Creator. Just think how anxiously death will watch and search thee, lest thou carry anything out of this life with thee, and then thou wilt easily despise the riches of this world. He who in this life is daily dying in sin, will pass through death to the awful punishment of eternal death; and no

one will enter into eternal life who begins not here to live in Christ Jesus. That when thou comest to die thou mayest live, implant thyself now in Christ by a living faith.

As then thou art sensible that death is to be expected at any time, let it continually be in thy mind. We always carry about with us our sins, why not then carry about with us constantly the thought of death, for "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23)? If thou wouldest escape the bitterness of death, then observe Christ's saying (John viii. 51). Faith unites us to Christ, and if we are in Christ we shall not die, for Christ Himself is our life. "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" with Him (1 Cor. vi. 17), and thus the faithful soul shall not die eternally, because the eternal God Himself is its life. The children of Israel passed safely through the Red Sea to the Promised Land, while Pharaoh and his host were drowned in its depths (Ex. xiv). And so death to the godly is really the beginning of their true life and the open door into the glories of Paradise. But death to the wicked is not the end of their ills; it is simply a transition from the ills they suffered here to the greater ones that shall follow death; a passage from the first death to the greater horror of the second death (Rev. xx. 14). So intimate and close is this union between Christ and believers that death cannot dissolve it (Rom. viii. 38, 39); but in

the awful shades of death divine grace attends them, lighting up the way to glory ; and for that trying hour Christ Himself provides convoys of angels to attend and protect His loved ones. The bodies of saints are temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19); and the Holy Spirit will never permit these temples of His to be entirely destroyed by death. The Word of God is an incorruptible seed (1 Pet. i. 23); death does not destroy that seed, but it is hidden in the hearts of God's people, and in His own good time He will quicken it into new life.

MEDITATION XLIV.

CONSOLATION IN THE DEATH OF FRIENDS.

To Die is Gain.

O DEVOUT soul, keep Christ, thy blessed Saviour, always in mind, and thou wilt have no dread of death. If thou art distressed at the thought of the agonies of death, be comforted in view of the mighty power of Christ thy Lord. The Israelites could not drink the waters of Marah, because of their bitterness, until the Lord showed Moses a tree “which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet” (Ex. xv. 25). And if thou dreadest the bitterness of death, fear not, for God shows thee a tree, which will change its bitterness into sweetness, that is the Branch sprung from the root of Jesse (Is. xi. 1). That Branch is Christ, who said, “If a man keep my saying he shall never see death” (John viii. 51). Our life here is full of burdens; it is a blessed thing then to find any comfort and alleviation of its miseries. After all it is not the Christian himself, but only his trouble that dies. This departure of the soul,

which we think of as death, is not an exit, but a transition. We do not lose our departed loved ones, we simply send them on before us; they do not die, they rise into a higher life; they do not forsake us, they are not forever parted from us, they have just preceded us to the glory-world; they are not lost to us, rather only separated from us for a time. When the good man dies it is to live a new life; and whilst we in tears lay away his body, he rejoices in the unspeakable gains of the world of glory. Our friends die; but in truth that means that they cease to sin, and all their disquietudes, their struggles, their miseries also cease. They die in faith; and that means that from what is only, as it were, the shadow of a life here, they pass over into the true life beyond; out of the darkness and mystery of this world they are transferred to the glorious light of heaven; and from sojourning among men they depart hence to dwell forever with God.

Life is a voyage o'er a troubled sea; death is the port of safety to which we are bound. We ought not grieve then that our dear ones have died, but we ought to rejoice that from the stormy sea of life they have safely passed into the haven of eternal rest. This life is a long and weary imprisonment, and death is glorious liberty; for this reason old Simeon on the verge of death exclaimed, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace" (Luke ii. 39). He desired to be permitted

to depart, as though he were here confined in a prison-house. Let us rather rejoice that our departed loved ones have been released from this prison, and have now attained unto perfect liberty. And so the Apostle had a desire to depart and be with Christ (Phil. i. 23), as if sensible that while he dwelt in the body he was miserably fettered. Shall we repine and grieve, then, that our friends have struggled out of these corporeal fetters, and are even now rejoicing in true liberty? Shall we array ourselves in sable garments of mourning for them, when they have put on the white robes of the redeemed? For it is written that to the elect have been given white robes in token of their innocence, and palms in their hands as emblems of victory (Rev. vii. 9). Shall we torment ourselves with tears and groans, when "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 17; Is. xxv. 8)? Shall we grieve for our loved ones, thus adding fresh burdens to our lives, when they are in that place of blessedness where there is neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain (Rev. xxi. 4), and where they rest from their labors (Rev. xiv. 13)? Shall their departure from us plunge us into excessive sadness, when they, in the company of the angels of God, are exulting in true and lasting joy? Shall we indulge in cries of lamentation for them, while they, before the Lamb, are singing that new song, having harps and golden vials full of odors,

which are the prayers of saints (Rev. v. 8, 9)? Shall we grieve for their departure from this world, when their departure is a matter of so much joy and blessedness to them?

How blessed it is to depart from this world, Christ plainly indicated when He replied to His disciples, whose hearts were filled with sadness because He had told them that He was about to go away from them, "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I" (John xiv. 28). Suppose thou wert in a raging storm at sea, and the waves violently agitated by the winds were dashing over thy ship, every moment threatening to engulf it, wouldest thou not seek the nearest harbor with all possible haste? Behold, the world is tottering and laboring to its fall; it testifies to its impending ruin, not only by its old age, but also by the signs that "the end of all things is at hand;" and wilt thou not give thanks to God, wilt thou not congratulate thy departed loved ones, that they, now safe with God, have escaped the awful ruin, the terrible shipwreck, and the horrible plagues that threaten this world with destruction? In whose hands can the salvation of thy departed be safer than in the hands of Christ? Where can their souls dwell more securely than in the heavenly kingdom? Hear the words of the holy Apostle— "Death is gain." Ah! it is a great gain to have

escaped from the increasing burden of sin here; it is a gain to have fled from the distressing evils that here afflict us; it is a gain to have passed over into the possession of the better things that God has laid up for those who love Him. If those whom thou hast lost by death were very dear to thee, let God now be all the dearer to thee, because He was pleased to take them to Himself in glory. Do not chide the Lord, for He hath taken away nothing but what He gave; He hath simply taken His own, not thine (Job i. 21). Do not be angry that the Lord has been pleased to take back again to Himself what He had simply entrusted to thee as a loan. The Lord only sees the evils that are to come, and He lovingly took away thy dear ones from the calamities that He saw impending.

Those that die in the Lord rest from their labors, while those whom they left behind in this world suffer grievous afflictions and torments, and that even in circumstances of material comfort and greatness, as in the palaces of kings. If thou hast lost dear ones by death, be persuaded that by and by thou wilt be with them again, and then they will be dearer to thee than ever; for a brief time they are separated from thee; but through a blissful and unending eternity thou wilt be re-united to them. For we cherish the sure and blessed hope that we shall soon depart hence, as some of our dear ones have, whom we have sent on before us,

and that we shall come to that life, where as we know our loved ones better we shall love them better than we ever loved them here, and that, too, without the least fear of anything to mar our perfect love. No matter how many there will be, nor how many there have been, yet that great assembly in the heavenly world will receive our souls in its glad embrace. There, with joy unspeakable, shall we be permitted to recognize the faces of our loved and lost, and hold sweet converse with them through eternal ages. There the sister shall walk hand in hand with her brother, and children with their parents; and no night shall ever interrupt the glad festivities of that eternal day. Dwell not, then, so much upon that sad hour when thy friends left thee, as upon that glad time when they shall be restored to thee on the morning of the resurrection. When our faith in the resurrection is strong and firm, death loses much of its terror; we look upon it rather as a quiet sleep. We may find hints of the resurrection in all nature about us. The sun daily sets to usher in the splendor of a new day. The plant that lies dead through the long winter springs into new life at the approach of spring. The fabled phoenix even in death re-produces itself. As the seasons end they begin again, keeping on in constant succession. The fruit comes to maturity and dies to reproduce other fruit from its seed. Unless the seed decay and die it will not spring up

into fruitfulness. Thus in nature all things perpetuate themselves by dying; and out of death evermore comes a new life. Shall we suppose that God has to no purpose placed such types as these before us in nature? Shall we ascribe more power to nature in these natural resurrections than to God, who promises to raise our bodies at the last day? He who gives life to dead and putrid seeds (1 Cor. xv. 37), so that they furnish sustenance for thy life here, will much rather raise from the dead thine own body and the bodies of thy friends, and with them thou shalt live eternally. God hath called thy beloved to their own beds (Is. lvii. 2); do not, I beseech thee, begrudge them the holy rest they there enjoy; it will be but a little while, and they shall rise again.

Perchance it was thy hope that thy loved ones would be useful members of the Church militant here on earth; but it has pleased God to transfer them to the Church triumphant above, and as it has pleased God, let it please thee as well. Perhaps it was thy hope that they would acquire vast stores of worldly wisdom. But it pleased God that they should rather in the heavenly school learn true wisdom; and as it pleased God, let it please thee also. Perhaps it was a fond hope of thy heart that thy departed loved ones would "be raised out of the dust and be set with princes" (Ps. cxiii. 8); but it pleased God to exalt them to companionship

with the princes of heaven, even the holy angels; and as it pleased God, oh, let it please thee also. Perhaps it was thy hope that they would lay up great riches upon earth. But it pleased God that instead of this they should come into possession of the inconceivable delights of the heavenly kingdom; and as it pleased God, let it please thee also.

O righteous God, Thou gavest; Thou hast taken away; blessed be Thy holy name forever and ever (Job i. 21).

MEDITATION XLV.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

Regard with wholesome fear the tribunal of Christ.

“THE Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John v. 22). I know, O Lord Jesus, that when Thou comest as the righteous Judge of all the earth, Thou wilt bring to light the secret deeds and words and thoughts of all men (1 Cor. iv. 5). Above us in that dread day will stand our awful Judge; beneath us will be a yawning hell; within us we shall carry a stinging conscience, and without us a threatening fire; on my right hand my sins shall rise up to accuse me, on my left the fiends of hell to terrify me. Good angels shall be there to bar the way to heaven, and evil angels to hasten my fall into the lowest hell. O blessed Lord Jesus, to whom shall I flee in such a wretched plight as this? As Job (ix. 28) said, “I am afraid of all my sorrows,” knowing that Thou canst not justly spare any sinful offender. There shall I stand between time and eternity; time is rapidly passing, the infinite

ages of eternity yet await me. There in that awful judgment the evil spirits shall require all their works, and all those evil deeds which they here persuaded me to do shall they there produce to my condemnation, that they may drag my wretched soul with them down to hell. "And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from a fig-tree" (Is. xxxiv. 4). "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed" (Is. xxiv. 23). And if these works of Thy hands, O God, which have never done any evil, shall flee away from Thy presence, how can I, a miserable sinner, hope to appear before Thy face? "Yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water" (Job xv. 15, 16)? "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear" (1 Pet. iv. 18)? Whither then shall I flee, to whom shall I turn, but to Thee, O Lord? Thou wilt be the Judge of my sins, and yet Thou hast died for my sins! "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John v. 22). Yes, the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, but on the other hand the Son hath been delivered up for our sins (Rom. iv. 25). "For God so loved the world that He gave His

only begotten Son" (John iii. 16), not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him. How then wilt thou judge me, O Lord Jesus, when the Father hath sent Thee, that through Thee I might be saved? Thou didst perfectly do the will of Thy Father in all things; how then wilt thou fail to do it in the matter of saving such a miserable sinner as I? "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. xviii. 14). Truly I am one of those little ones in Thy sight, as well as in my own; for what am I, but dust and ashes (Gen. xviii. 27)? Nor am I but dust and ashes in Thy sight, but in respect of growth in godliness I am very little and very insignificant. Therefore, O Lord Jesus, do Thou finish in me, one of Thy little ones, the will of Thy Father in heaven.

Thou hast come into the world, O Lord Jesus, "to save that which was lost" (Matt. xviii. 11); how canst Thou then judge him who ardently desires to be saved by Thee? I know that my sins will rise in judgment against me, and that they will cry aloud for vengeance upon me, but then, O blessed Jesus, Thou hast transferred my sins to Thyself, Thou art "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world" (John i. 29), and why not mine also? How wilt Thou condemn me for my sins, when Thou hast died for them? Thou hast died for the sins of the whole world (1 John

ii. 2), why not then for mine also? O blessed Lord Jesus, if Thou hadst wished to judge so strictly, why wert Thou constrained to leave Thy heavenly home and become a man, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? Devils will accuse me, and will require from my soul the evil deeds which they persuaded me to do. "But the prince of this world is judged" (John xvi. 11), and the "prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Thee" (John xiv. 30). And if he has nothing in Thee, surely he will not have in me; for I believe in Thee, O Lord Jesus, and for that reason Thou abidest in me and I in Thee (John xiv. 23). If then Satan accuse me, he will accuse Thy friend; if he accuse me, he will accuse Thy brother; if he accuse me, he will accuse the well-beloved Son of the eternal Father. And how wilt Thou severely judge Thy friend, Thy brother and Thy son? The law of Moses will judge me in that day, and will pronounce a curse upon me. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Deut. xxvii. 26). But Thou, O Christ, "hast redeemed me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me" (Gal. iii. 13). The law of Moses may pronounce a curse upon me for my sin, but Thou wilt pronounce a blessing upon me, for oh, how I long to hear Thy voice saying unto me, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared

for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34)! The law may accuse me, but Thou never wilt, but wilt rather intercede for me (Rom. viii. 34). I fear not the curse of the law, for "Thou hast blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us" (Col. ii. 14). Lost souls will rise up and condemn me in that day, and declare that I merit the same condemnation with themselves. I freely confess, O Lord Jesus, that for my sin and guilt I deserve no better than they, and yet my humble confession of my guilt, and my saving knowledge of Thee, after all, does make me different from them. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation" (John v. 24). I hear Thy word, O Lord Jesus, and I do believe on Thee, and though my faith be so weak, yet I do believe. "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief" (Mk. ix. 24). "Lord, I believe, but increase my faith" (Luke xvii. 5). Though I may not be free from the sins of the damned, yet from that of unbelief Thou wilt deliver me, O Lord.

All these, mine accusers, strike terror to my heart, but the thought of Thee, O my righteous Judge, gives new courage to my soul. The Father hath delivered to Thee all judgment (John v. 22); He hath delivered all things into Thy hands (Matt. xi. 27); and yet He hath also delivered Thee up for us all (Rom. viii. 32); and moreover Thou Thy-

self hast delivered up Thyself for the Church, that Thou mightest sanctify it, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word (Eph. v. 26). How wilt Thou then severely judge those for whom Thou didst deliver up Thyself to death, even the death of the cross (Phil. ii. 8)? "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church ; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, of His bones" (Eph. v. 29, 30).

MEDITATION XLVI.

THE DESIRE FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

Always Look Upward, O My Soul.

O DEVOUT soul, thou shouldest not set thy heart upon this fleeting life, but rather upon that life that shall endure forever and ever. Let thy desires ascend to that blessed place where there is perpetual youth without the infirmities of old age; where life shall never more be followed by death; where blissful joy is unalloyed with sorrow, and where there is a kingdom unchangeable and unending. If beauty here has any charms for thee, remember that "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43). If activity and strength delight thee, bear in mind that the elect "are as the angels of God in heaven" (Matt. xxii. 30). If a long and healthful life seems especially desirable to thee, there thou shalt rejoice in eternal health. If thou longest for full satisfaction here, then rejoice, for the elect shall be satisfied when they awake with the likeness of the Lord (Ps. xvii. 15). If music charms

thee, there the angelic choir shall chant the praises of God forever and ever. If thy heart turns to pure and holy pleasures, there God shall make thee drink of the river of His pleasures (Ps. xxxvi. 8). If wisdom attract thee, there the infinite wisdom of God will be revealed to thee. If friendship is delightful to thee here, there thou wilt love God far more than thou lovest thyself, and God will love thee more than thou lovest thyself. If Christian fellowship and concord please thee, there among all the hosts of heaven there will be but one heart and mind. If power, there all things shall be easy to thee, as thou shalt share in the very power of God; desiring nothing that shall be beyond thy power of attainment, but desiring nothing that is not in perfect accord with God's holy will. If honor and riches possess attractions for thee, there God shall make His faithful servants rulers over many things (Matt. xxv. 23). If thou longest for true security be comforted ; for in heaven it is just as certain that eternal happiness will never fail thee, as it is that thou wouldest never lose it of thine own will and choice, or that God, thy loving heavenly Father, will ever deprive thee of it, or that there is any power in the universe greater than God that can separate thee from God, against thine own will. Whatever the elect can possibly long for, there they shall find to their infinite satisfaction, for then shall they see Him face to face (1 Cor.

xiii. 12), who is all and in all. The blessings thou shalt there enjoy shall be immeasurable, without number, and inconceivably precious. There we shall rejoice in eternal health of body, the greatest purity of soul, the riches of divine glory and pleasure, the perpetual companionship of angels and saints, whilst our bodies shall shine in the splendor of the glory of God. Oh ! how the redeemed shall rejoice in the delights of their heavenly home, in the blessed society of that celestial kingdom, in the glorification of their bodies. Oh ! how they shall exult as they think of the world, that for their love of Christ they despised, and of the awful torments of the hell they have escaped. The most insignificant crown of eternal life shall be far preferable to a thousand worlds, because that is infinite, whilst these are but finite. Nor need we fear that different degrees of glory in heaven will ever occasion envy in the hearts of the redeemed, for unity of love will reign in all. And because of this supreme love the joy of one will be the joy of all. There is no greater good in heaven or in earth than God. And so there can be no greater, no more perfect joy conceived of than to see God, and to possess Him; and to feast the eyes upon God, even for a single moment only, will far surpass all the joys of earth; for we shall see Him as He is, and God shall be in us and we in God.

On this life's journey we have Christ with us

constantly; but veiled to our sight under the Word and Sacraments. We cannot here know Him by actual sight and touch of His blessed body; but in that future life we shall see Him face to face, when at His own table in the heavenly kingdom He distributes to us that bread of life that shall perfectly satisfy our hungry souls—just as the two disciples knew Him, not by the way, but recognized Him as He sat at meat and brake bread with them (Luke xxiv. 31). The heavenly city, the holy Jerusalem, has within it no temple made with hands, nor has it need of the sun or of the moon, “for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (Rev. xxi. 22), “and the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev. xxi. 23). There glorious vision shall succeed faith, actual enjoyment shall succeed hope, and perfect fruition shall succeed love. In the building of Solomon’s temple “there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard” (1 Kings vi, 7); so in the heavenly Jerusalem, neither pain nor tribulation shall be experienced, because the materials for this temple, that is, its spiritual stones (1 Pet. ii. 5), have all been prepared beforehand in the world through sorrow and tribulation. The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (1 Kings x. 1, 2) may set forth a redeemed soul’s hastening towards Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem; it comes with a great train

of holy angels, with diverse virtues as its gifts of gold and precious stones. It wonders at the wisdom of Christ the King ; at the ranks of His servants, that is, the angels and redeemed saints; at the food of His table, that is, the abundance of that eternal repast He spreads before them; at their glorious apparel, that is, the beauty and grace of their glorified bodies; at the splendor of His house, that is, the magnitude and magnificence of the heavenly palace; at the sacrifices offered up, that is, the unceasing ascriptions of praise that rise to Him; and in amazement the soul will confess that it could not have believed as possible what its eyes now behold.

Take courage, then, O faithful soul, and turn thy thought to those good things that are laid up in heaven for thee; thy spirit ought even now direct itself whither thou wilt by and by go. In time we must strive towards that place where we are to abide through all eternity. Be assured he will not enter into the glory of his Lord who has no desire for it. Thou hopest some time to appear in the presence of God; strive after holiness, then, for He Himself is holy (Lev. xi. 45). Thou art looking forward to the companionship of the angels in heaven; see to it, then, that thou repel not their gentle ministries now by thy sin. Thou hopest to enjoy eternal blessedness after awhile, why then desire so ardently the good things of this life now?

Thou art seeking citizenship in heaven; why then desire so greatly "a continuing city here" (Heb. xiii. 14)? Thou art longing to see thy Saviour Christ, why then fear death? He rightly fears death who fears to go into the presence of Christ. Thou art also to enter the heavenly Jerusalem; oh, why then dost thou so defile thyself with sin when it is plainly written, "that there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Rev. xxi. 27)? Thou desirest to eat of the fruit of the tree of life (Rev. xxii. 2); but then thou must first apprehend Christ, the true tree of life, in this life, for it is written: Blessed are they which wash their robes and make them "white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 14); "that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14); "without are dogs and sorcerers" (Rev. xxii. 15); beware then of impurity and unchastity; without also are "murderers," beware then of excessive anger; without are "idolaters," beware then of avarice and of making an idol of any worldly object; "without are liars," beware then of every cunning artifice of sin, of all that savors of falsehood. If thou art longing to be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb, long also for the coming of Christ, thy Bridegroom. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come!" But if thou hast not the earnest of the Spirit, through which thou mayst call, "The Lord cometh!" never

will Christ, the Bridegroom, admit thee to His heavenly nuptials. Thou art not a true bride if thou desirest not the coming of thy Bridegroom. Wouldst thou have a name and a place in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. xxi. 1); why then set thy heart so fondly on the perishing things of this life? Wouldst thou be made a partaker of the divine nature; why then cling so tenaciously to these empty creature comforts? Dost thou look forward to that "building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v. 1); why then shouldst thou not desire this earthly house of thy habitation to be dissolved? Dost thou, indeed, "desire to be clothed upon with thy house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. v. 2); why not then provide for it, so that thou mayst not be found naked?

If the adorable Trinity dwell not in thy heart by faith in this life, never in the future life will that Trinity dwell in thee to thine unspeakable glory; if thou dost not enjoy the beginnings of eternal life in thy soul here, thou wilt never rejoice in its full fruition there.

MEDITATION XLVII.

THE BEATIFIC VISION OF GOD IN HEAVEN.

Heaven is our Fatherland.

“IN My Father’s house are many mansions,” are our Saviour’s words (John xiv. 1). Oh! how I long to see that place, O Lord, where Thou hast prepared an eternal mansion for me? “For I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were” (Ps. xxxix. 12). “Few and evil have the years of my pilgrimage been” (Gen. xlvi. 9); and in my life of exile here I long for my heavenly home; “for our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. iii. 20). I long to see “the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Ps. xxvii. 13). Our life here is as a vain show, “my days are as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before Thee” (Ps. xxxix. 5, 6). “And now, Lord, what wait I for” (Ps. xxxix. vii)? Is it not for Thee? O Lord Jesus, “when shall I come and appear before Thee?” “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God” (Ps. xlvi. 1). O true and perfect and boundless joy! O joy upon

joy! O joy surpassing all joy, without which there is no joy! Oh, when shall I enter that blessed place of joy, and there behold my God! "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness" (Ps. xvii. 15); "at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. xvi. 11); "I shall be satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make me drink of the river of Thy pleasures; with Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 8, 9).

O longed-for life! O the unspeakable blessedness of that time, when the Adorable Trinity shall be the completion of all our desires, whom we shall forevermore behold, whom we shall never cease to love, and whom we shall unweariedly praise through endless ages. To see God—ah! that will surpass all the joys of earth. To gaze on the face of Christ, to live with Christ, to hear the voice of Christ, will far exceed the most ardent desires of our hearts. O Lord Jesus, Thou most blessed Spouse of my soul, when wilt Thou bring my soul into Thy royal palace as Thine honored bride? What can I want there that Thou wilt not supply? What more can we desire or look for when God Himself shall be all in all (1 Cor. xv. 28)? Oh, that will be as beauty to my sight, honey to my taste, music to my ear, balm to my nostrils, and a flower to my touch. God will then be all in all, and will distribute the blessings of His kingdom to each one according to his heart's desire. If thou desirest life, health,

peace, honor, there God will be all and in all to thy soul! What is here dark and mysterious, even to the most learned in the Church, will then be plain and clear, even to the smallest children. Christ in His blessed and glorified humanity shall there be present with us, and with sweetest voice shall disclose the hidden mysteries of our salvation. Sweet shall be His voice, and comely His countenance (Song ii. 14); grace is poured into His lips (Ps. xlv. 2); and He is crowned with glory and honor (Ps. viii. 5).

And if God shall be all in all, then surely He will grant us fulness of knowledge, the perfection of peace, and the continuing powers of memory through all eternity. God the Son will satisfy our intellects with the fullest knowledge; God the Holy Ghost will satisfy our wills with the holiest love; and God the Father will charge our memories with the unfailing remembrance of both. Thou, O God, art the Light; "in Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 10), see Thee, that is, in Thyself, in the glory of Thy countenance, when we see Thee face to face. Nor shall we see thee only, but we shall also live with Thee; and not only that, but we shall praise Thee; and not only so, but we shall be partakers of Thy joy; and more than that, we shall be as the angels of God (Matt. xxii. 30), aye, like God Himself, who is blessed forevermore (1 John iii. 2).

O faithful soul, in wonder and amazement adore

the marvelous compassion of thy Saviour. Not only does He receive us who were His enemies into His grace, but He also forgives our sins, freely justifies us, brings us into possession of our heavenly inheritance, makes us like the holy angels, yes, even like unto Himself. O the blessed citizenship of the saints! O thou heavenly Jerusalem! O thou holy abode of the most holy Trinity, when shall I enter the sacred courts of Thy temple? The temple of that heavenly Jerusalem is the Lamb (Rev. xxi. 22), aye the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world" (John i. 29), the Lamb slain for them from the foundation of the world (Rev. xiii. 8). Oh, when shall I worship my God in that holy temple, that is, God in God? When shall that heavenly sun (Rev. xxi. 23) arise for me which illumines all those holy courts? An exile still I am from my heavenly fatherland, but a goodly heritage is laid up for me (Ps. xvi. 6). To them that believe on His name power is given to become the sons of God (John i. 12). And if sons "then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17).

Be comforted, then, O my soul, and let thine aspirations go up more and more after thy heavenly inheritance! "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance" (Ps. xvi. 5), "and my exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv. 1). What more than this can the compassionate love of God bestow? He

gives us life ; He gives us His only Son ; He gives us His very self. And had He known of anything greater in heaven, or in earth, He would have given that too. In God we live (Acts xvii. 28), we are the temple of God (1 Cor. iii. 16), we possess God here indeed in spirit and in mystery, but there in deed and in truth. There our hopes will become blissful reality. There we shall not simply sojourn, but we shall dwell in a secure abode forever and ever !

MEDITATION XLVIII.

THE BLESSED COMPANIONSHIP OF ANGELS IN HEAVEN.

Heaven is our Home!

“ IN the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven ” (Matt. xxii. 30). Where is the man who can fittingly set forth this blessed state of the redeemed in heaven ? What human heart hath ever conceived of the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. ii. 9) ? The elect of God, with bodies glorified at the resurrection, and with no more fear of death, and without a single stain or spot of corruption clinging to them, enjoy the beatific vision of God in heaven. “ I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved ” (Gen. xxxii. 30), exclaimed the godly patriarch Jacob. And if only a momentary vision of God could produce such transports of joy, oh, what will be the eternal vision of God ? If only a brief glimpse of God, as He appeared in human form, brought life and salvation to Jacob’s soul, surely when we see

God face to face in heaven it will bring eternal life and unending blessedness to our souls. What more could be added to fill up the cup of blessedness in heaven? What more than this beatific vision of God could the redeemed ask or desire? And yet, in addition to all this, they will enjoy the sweet and blessed companionship of the angels of God; and more than this, they themselves shall be like the angels, in the activity of their celestial bodies, in their splendor, and in their immortality. We shall put on with them the same garments of holiness, and standing before the throne of the Lamb, clothed in white robes, we shall sing eternal anthems of praise to the Lord our God (Rev. vii. 9). Crowns of glory like theirs shall adorn our brows, and in the same blessings of that immortal state we too shall rejoice. "We shall surely die, because we have seen God," exclaimed Manoah (Judges xiii. 22). But there we shall see "thousand thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (Dan. vii. 10) angels, and we shall live forever and ever.

And if we are to be like the angels in heaven, then we need no longer fear that in that holy place we shall ever by sin make ourselves unlike them. We shall put off the filthy rags of our sinful natures, and be clothed with the garments of salvation, with the white robe of holy innocence (Is. lxi. 10). In that blest abode troubles shall no longer

oppress us, angry passions no more distress us, envy and hate no more distract us, foolish desires no more disturb us, and hurtful ambition no more inflame us. This load of sin shall there burden us no more, nor shall we be obliged there to lament the stains of sin with penitential tears, nor live in constant fear of its deadly wounds to our souls. For "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. v. 5) hath conquered sin and Satan, and in His might shall we all prevail.

And if we shall be like the angels, then indeed shall we neither hunger nor thirst any more. God shall be the food of our souls, and in Him we shall be abundantly satisfied, nor shall He ever fail to refresh us with supplies of love and grace. Of the redeemed it is written: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters (Rev. vii. 16, 17), and from them shall flow rivers of living water (John vii. 38); and there shall be prepared a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees (Is. xxv. 6). As we shall partake of that heavenly repast we shall shout aloud for very joy of heart. O blessed Lord Jesus, may all these joys that Thou hast promised us be fulfilled in us in spirit and in truth. Of the fruit of the vine shall we drink in Thy Father's kingdom (Matt. xxvi.

29,) but in spirit and in truth. The words which Thou hast spoken unto us they are spirit and they are life (John vi. 63), and so in the language of this world Thou dost set forth the joys that await us in the future world.

And if we are to be like the angels, then surely we shall no longer fear death; "death will be swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. xv. 54); death shall be forever destroyed, and "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Is. xxv. 8). There, there, will be joy without sorrow, health without pain, life without toil, light without darkness; there our love will never grow cold, our joy never diminish, a groan of pain never be heard, grief never be experienced, no sadness ever be seen, and eternal gladness shall be our unfailing possession; there we shall have certain security, secure tranquillity, tranquil delight, delightful happiness, a happy eternity, an eternal blessedness, the blessed Trinity, the Triune unity, the unity of Deity, and the beatific vision of God. Be of good comfort, O my soul, and rise to a higher and higher appreciation of the honor that Christ hath conferred upon thee! We shall join the glorious company of angels and archangels, and be associated with rank on rank of heavenly intelligences, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers (Col. i. 16), and not only so, but we shall be like them also. There we shall come to know our guardian angel

of this life, nor shall we be without its holy ministry there, but we shall be made glad by its blessed companionship; we shall no longer need its protecting care, but its society shall be a source of constant joy, and upon its heavenly splendor we shall gaze with clarified vision.

And if we shall be like the angels, then these frail, feeble and mortal bodies of ours shall be changed, and become spiritual bodies, active as the angels, and immortal. They shall shine with the very effulgence of the divine glory, because of their nearness to God, who dwells in a "light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. vi. 16), and "who covereth Himself with light as a garment" (Ps. civ. 2); and they shall be incorruptible, because they are like the angels, nay rather, because they shall be changed into the likeness of the glorified body of Christ (Phil. iii. 21); they are sown here in corruption, they shall be raised in incorruption; they are sown in dishonor, they shall be raised in glory; they are sown in weakness, they shall be raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall be raised a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv. 42-44); it shall shine as the brightness of the firmament forever (Dan. xii. 3). Come, O blessed Lord Jesus, O come and make us partakers of Thy heavenly glory.

MEDITATION XLIX.

THE SEVERITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

Ever keep in mind the torments of hell!

MEDITATE, O devout soul, upon the awfulness of future punishment, and thou wilt easily overcome every base and sinful desire. Future torment will mean the presence of all that is base and sinful, and the entire absence of all that is good. What imaginable evil can be wanting to those who are being punished for sin, the greatest of all evils? And what possible good can they enjoy who are banished from the presence of God, the very highest good? There, in that world of woe, shall be the heat of fire and the rigor of cold; perpetual darkness, and the smoke of their torment arising forever; there scalding tears of sorrow shall unceasingly flow; there the awful sight of the demons of hell shall strike terror into the souls of the lost; there shall be weeping and wailing forever and ever; the torment of a perpetual and unquenchable thirst, sulphurous vapors, the worm that dieth not, a horrible fear, pains unspeakable, and shame and

confusion of face as they stand with the black record of their sins unfolded before them ; envy, hatred, sorrow, eternal exclusion from the beatific vision of God, with no ray of hope to cheer the awful gloom of that place of unending torment. The light of that fire shall by the power of God be separated from its burning power ; its light shall be the source of endless joy to the saints of God, but its burning power shall contribute to the endless torment of the damned ; its light will never give consolation to the lost, nor present to their vision any object of delight, but shall serve rather to augment their misery, as it will disclose ever new horrors to torment them. Their eyes shall never gaze upon the light of the sun or the moon or the stars, nor upon redeemed saints or their glorified Saviour, but rather upon the fiends of hell and all the host of the damned, while their wails of despair shall unceasingly resound, and "the smoke of their torment ascend forever and ever." Their ears shall be continually saluted with the despairing shrieks and incessant blasphemies and horrible cries of demons. Their palates shall be constantly afflicted with an unquenchable thirst and an insatiable hunger, and yet robbed of all capacity for the enjoyment of food and drink. Their sense of smell shall be tortured with the horrible odors of sulphurous flame. The sense of touch shall experience within and without the utmost agony from

the raging flames of that infernal fire, that shall pierce even to the very marrow of their bones!

The bodies of the damned shall be hideously deformed, sluggish and unwieldly. Memory shall torture them with the record of their sins; and the burden of their grief shall be not their awful sins, but the loss of their former pleasures of this life. One spark of hell fire shall cause more horrible anguish to lost sinners than if the pangs of travail were prolonged a thousand years; "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii. 13), "for their worm shall not die neither shall their fire be quenched" (Is. lxvi. 24). Every several sin committed here in the body shall there have its own peculiar punishment. As the redeemed soul shall have no desire in the kingdom of God ungratified, so the lost soul in the realms of despair shall not have one desire gratified. It will profit the lost nothing that in this life they enjoyed the good things of the world in greatest profusion, nay rather the very recollection of them then will add to their awful torment. It will profit them nothing that in this life they lived in rioting and drunkenness, since there they cannot obtain even a drop of water to cool their parched tongues. It will avail them nothing that in this life they arrayed themselves in gorgeous apparel, for there they will be clothed in shame and confusion, and their poor bodies will be arrayed in ignominy. What avail

will all their earthly honors be to them then, for in hell there will be no honor, but continual pain and groans of despair? What will the heaps of riches they have gathered in this life avail them there, since there all will be equally poor? Far removed will they be from the beatific vision of God! And not to see God will exceed all the other punishments of hell. Ah, if those lost souls shut up in the awful prison of hell could look upon the face of their God, it would dispel all sense of punishment, of pain, of sorrow. The awful wrath of God they shall suffer, but never, never, shall they behold His blessed face! Banishment from His face shall they experience, and yet never look upon that holy face. The holy wrath of God shall ever keep kindling the fires of eternal damnation. And their punishment will be not only a removal from a blessed contemplation of God, but they shall be tormented by the perpetual sight of devils, whose willing slaves they were in this life. If the sight of a supposed spectre here strikes such terror into the soul as almost to deprive it of life, how will it ever endure the horrible sight of the devils forever and ever? Not only will the lost be obliged to company eternally with these demons of hell, but it will add to their awful wretchedness to realize that through all eternity they will be tormented and tortured by these same evil spirits.

If the devil afflicts the righteous so severely in

this life, by permission of God, for their profit, oh, how dreadfully will he torture the lost who are given over into his power forever? And not only shall they be thus tormented by Satan outwardly, but also by an accusing conscience within, as a worm that dieth not; conscience shall marshal in dark array before their eyes all the sins they have ever committed. And their torment will be all the severer because there remaineth no more room for repentance. When the wise virgins entered with the Bridegroom, immediately the door was shut; that is, the door of divine favor, the door of mercy, the door of consolation, the door of hope, the door of holy conversion. Then shall the lost cry out and say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. vi. 16); but how vain that cry, for the heavens and the earth shall flee away from His wrath, as it is written, "Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (Rev. xvi. 20).

Every circumstance or gift that adds to the blessedness and glory of the redeemed, shall but add to the misery and torment of the lost. There will be indeed degrees of punishment, and yet this will afford no consolation, not even to one who suffers the least of those eternal torments; while he who suffers the greater tortures will envy him who suffers the less. It will be no mitigation of their

awful miseries for the lost to know that some of their relatives and friends have been admitted into the heavenly home, as also the redeemed will be capable of feeling no sorrow that some of their friends have passed into the place of eternal torment. So awful will be their pain and torment that everything else will be excluded from their minds.

The damned shall bear a bitter hatred against all God's creatures ; they shall hate themselves, the holy angels, the elect saints of God, aye, even God Himself, not because of anything in His holy nature, but because of His righteous punishment of their sins. The evils of this life come, to a large extent, singly. One is straitened by poverty ; another suffers by severe sickness ; another is oppressed by a hard servitude, and another is burdened with a load of insult and contumely. But in that world of woe a host of evils will torture every lost soul ; every faculty, every member of the body, will suffer the dreadful penalty of sin. In this life hope serves to lighten every burden, but there hope will forever have vanished from their breasts ; the punishments of hell will not only last forever, but they will last forever without one single moment's interruption or relief. And so it is that if it were possible for all the men born from Adam to the present day, and who shall yet be born, to share equally the punishment that shall be

justly inflicted upon the lost soul in hell for only one sin, then the torture that each one would suffer would exceed all the torments ever suffered by evil doers in this world.

O dear Lord, help us so to keep this eternal punishment in mind that by Thy grace we may be preserved from ever suffering its awful torments!

MEDITATION L.

THE ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

The Punishment of Sin is Eternal.

MEDITATE for awhile, O devout soul, on the eternity of future punishment, and thou wilt perceive more clearly its awful severity. The flames of hell rage and burn without end, forever and ever. The life of the lost is to die eternally ; their death is to live in everlasting torment. The devil never wearies in tormenting the lost, nor will death ever come to their relief. That fire is always consuming that it may always keep alive ; those torments are ever increasing that they may always be renewed ; the lost are ever dying that they may always live ; and they ever live that they may always keep on dying ! That one is to be tormented forever and ever, without any cessation whatever, will sink the soul in the deepest despair. What can be more intolerable than to be always longing for that which can never be realized, and to be longing for that to end which never can end ? In that eternal world the lost will never obtain that

which they so ardently desire, and yet what they most abhor, that will they be compelled to suffer forever and ever. When the holy wrath of God against sin shall cease, then shall cease the punishment of the damned ; but that wrath is eternal, and so will their punishment be. When the lost exercise true repentance, then can they be delivered from their sins ; but the time for repentance has passed, and no hope of divine pardon remains. When devils cease to torment, the lost will cease to be tormented ; but the hellish rage of the devil never will cease, and neither then will the torments of the lost. When God's eternal justice changes, the punishment of the damned will cease ; but God never can cease to be just, and so their torments shall continue forever and ever. It is but strict justice that those who would never leave off sinning in this life shall never leave off suffering for it there. It is but right that vengeance shall never terminate upon that soul which, while it could, never desired to terminate its career of sin. The damned spent their own eternity, that is, this earthly life, in persistent sin ; and it is just and right that they should spend God's eternity in suffering for their sin. They ceased to sin because they ceased to live ; nor would they have shown any desire to cease sinning could they have prolonged their lives eternally, that they might sin eternally.

The fuel of the fires of hell, that is, the spots and

stains of sin, is eternal ; and so shall its punishment deservedly be. God's eyes will never be closed to the awful heinousness of sin in the condemned soul ; how then can the dread penalty pronounced against sin ever be relaxed ? Sin is an infinite offence, because committed against an infinite God ; and Christ has paid for its satisfaction an infinite price, and it is but right therefore that those who wilfully die in sin should suffer an infinite penalty for it. Man by his sin has destroyed the eternal good that was in him ; and so by the just and impartial judgment of God he suffers eternal evil. God in the beginning created man in His own image that he might live in blessedness with Him forever ; and has renewed him after his fall into sin in the image of Christ. He has prepared for all the means of eternal salvation, and offered to all its great rewards ; it is no more than just that those who have despised these rewards so offered should be subjected to eternal punishment. The will to do evil shall never be taken from the lost, nor the punishment of that will ever cease. They foolishly preferred the fleeting pleasures and short-lived good of this world to God, the infinite Good ; their aspirations were all for the delights of this brief and transitory life rather than for the unspeakable treasures of eternal life ; and it is but just that they shall suffer the punishments of doom eternal.

O boundless eternity ! O immeasurable eternity ! O eternity that baffles the grasp of finite mind, how thine illimitable ages will add to the torments of the damned! After the lapse of unnumbered ages the thought will still come with crushing force that this is but the beginning of their endless torment. What a severe affliction we esteem it here for an invalid to lie, unable to move, even upon the softest couch, for so brief a time as thirty years ; but, oh, what will it be to lie burning in that " lake that burneth with fire and brimstone " for thirty thousands of thousands of years ! O eternity, eternity, how thou alone dost immeasurably heighten the torments of the damned ! Severe indeed is their punishment on account of the bitter pain of the torments they shall suffer ; severer still because of the diversity of these torments ; but the thought that they shall last forever and ever with no diminution, no cessation, is the worst of all. That will be death without death, end without end, perishing without perishing ; because that death is an ever living death ; that end is a ceaseless beginning ; and that perishing knows no perishing. Those poor lost souls shall seek for life and find it not ; they " shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them " (Rev. ix. 6) ; and after a hundred thousand, thousand, thousand years they shall simply suffer renewed torments without end ! The very thought of the endlessness of their pain will torment them

more than the sense of eternal pain itself. What can be conceived of as more intolerable than thus to die that you are always living, and thus to live that you are always dying? That life will be lifeless, and that death will be deathless! If thou art life, why dost thou die, and if death, how dost thou always endure?

Our minds cannot grasp the idea of eternity; as it can be circumscribed by no measure of time, so it can be comprehended by no finite mind. If thou wouldst get some conception of eternal duration, think of time before the creation of the world. If thou canst find a point of time when God had a beginning, thou canst determine also when the sufferings of the lost will end. Imagine a mountain whose lofty height exceeds the distance from earth to the sky; suppose an eagle should carry away from this mountain a single grain of the finest sand once in a thousand years, now we might conceive that after an incomprehensibly long period of ages the task might be finished and the mountain entirely removed; and yet we cannot hope that the fires of hell will ever be extinguished. The rewards of the saved will never come to an end, and neither will the punishments of the lost; for as God's mercy toward the elect is infinite, so will be His justice towards the reprobate. Suppose that the torments of the lost in kind are as numerous as the drops of the ocean. Now suppose that at the

end of every thousand years a little bird should fly down and drink a tiny drop of water from that vast ocean. We might hope that by and by the waters of that ocean would be exhausted; but we cannot hope that the torments of the damned will ever, ever come to an end.

O devout soul, let the eternity of future punishment be ever before thy mind; to remember hell thus may prevent thy falling into it at last. Take heed that thou repent, while yet the time of pardon lingers! What shall that fire consume but thy sins? And the more thou heapest up iniquities, the more fuel art thou laying up for those eternal burnings.

O blessed Lord Jesus, who hast offered complete satisfaction for our sins by Thy bitter passion, guard us from eternal condemnation at the last! Amen.

MEDITATION LI.

THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION OF THE GODLY.

To arise with Christ is Life.

THE resurrection of Christ is of no avail to thee unless Christ also rises in thy soul. As Christ should be conceived in thee, born in thee, and live in thee, so likewise ought He to arise in thee. Death precedes every resurrection, for he cannot arise again, who has not first died; so it is with respect to our spiritual resurrection. Christ will not arise in thee unless the old Adam first die in thee; the inner man of the Spirit arises not until after the outer man of the flesh is dead and buried; the newness of the Spirit will not appear until the oldness of the flesh disappears. Nor is it enough that Christ should arise in thy soul but once, for the old Adam cannot be destroyed in a single moment. The old sinful nature strives daily to live anew in thee; and daily must thou destroy it that Christ may daily begin to live in thee. Christ ascended not to heaven, nor entered into His glory, until after His resurrection from death (Luke xxiv. 26);

and so thou wilt not enter into the heavenly glory until Christ first rises and lives in thee. If Christ live not in thee, thou art no part of His mystical body ; and if thou art not a part of His body in the Church militant upon earth, He will not lead thee victoriously into His Church triumphant in heaven. A betrothal always precedes marriage, and if thy soul has not been betrothed to Christ through faith (Hos. ii. 19), and sealed with the pledge of the Holy Spirit, it will never appear at the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 7). Therefore let Christ rise and live in thee, that thou mayst live eternally with Him in heaven. This is the first resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power" (Rev. xx. 5, 6). If thou wouldest then appear in that resurrection unto eternal life, Christ must daily rise in thy soul in this life.

Christ arose from the dead at "the rising of the sun" (Mark xvi. 2), and so if Christ arise in thee, the light of the saving knowledge of God will arise in thy soul. But how can there be such light where the gross darkness of sin still reigns ? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10); but how can there be heavenly wisdom where the favor of the Lord has no place ? And if one be utterly destitute of the light of the knowledge of God in this life, how can he be a partaker of God's eternal light in the life that is to come ?

The children of light only pass over into the glories of eternal light, whilst the children of darkness pass into the awful gloom of everlasting darkness. Christ in His resurrection triumphed over death, and so the soul in whom Christ spiritually rises will pass from death to life (John v. 24); nor can he be overcome by death, since Christ, the Death of death, lives in him. Christ by His resurrection brought in perfect and "everlasting righteousness" (Dan. ix. 24); "He was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25), and he likewise is justified from sin in whom Christ spiritually rises, for how can sin find place where Christ's perfect righteousness blooms in the life? But that righteousness becomes ours through faith. Our Lord Jesus Christ by His glorious resurrection has robbed Satan of his victory over us, for by His descent into hell Christ destroyed his kingdom, spoiled that strong man's palace, and shattered in pieces the armor in which he trusted (Luke xi. 22), and so Satan can nevermore prevail over him in whom Christ rises spiritually, for he cannot be conquered by Satan in whom the Conqueror of Satan lives.

At the resurrection of Christ there was a great earthquake (Matt. xxviii. 2), and so it is that when a soul arises with Christ into a new life, it is attended with serious commotions and with true contrition of heart. The old Adam will not down

in us without severe struggles and a great show of resistance. And so Christ's spiritual resurrection in our souls will be accompanied by a great inward commotion, by serious and profound agitation of heart; sin must first be destroyed, and this cannot occur without first a penitent acknowledgment of sin, with a serious and hearty contrition for it. This inward contrition of heart precedes any spiritual resurrection with Christ. The prophet Isaiah said, "As a lion He hath broken all my bones" (Is. xxxviii. 13). Behold how great a commotion is here! But he immediately adds, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit, so wilt Thou recover me and make me to live; Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Is. xxxviii. 16, 17). Behold here a spiritual resurrection from sin.

When Christ arose from the dead an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and sat upon the sepulchre (Matt. xxviii. 2); so if Christ is spiritually risen in thee, thou wilt rejoice in the companionship of angels. Where the old Adam still lives and rules there Satan delights to dwell, but where Christ lives and reigns there angels love to abide. For it is written that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke xv. 10). And in the soul of such an one Christ is spiritually risen. The soul that has not yet experienced this spiritual resurrection

of Christ is without the grace of God, and hence deprived of the guardianship of the holy angels; is still under the dominion of the old unrenewed nature of sin and of the devil; and what possible fellowship can there be between the holy angels and the devil?

After His resurrection Christ appeared to His disciples and showed Himself alive unto them (Luke xxiv. 15); and so if thou hast become a partaker of His resurrection through faith, show thyself a living member of His body by thy deeds of love and charity. A man cannot be deemed alive if he fails to manifest the signs and deeds of life. When the soul is possessed by Christ, the Holy Spirit will there take up His abode and lead the soul to every good; for those "who are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. v. 25). The sun scatters the splendor of its beams on every side, and the light of faith diffuses itself on every hand in glowing deeds of love. Take away light from the sun, and then canst thou separate works of love to our fellowmen from faith in God. Our sins are dead works (Heb. ix. 14); and if thou walkest in dead works, how canst thou possibly be living in Christ and Christ in thee? Sin belongs to and is a manifestation of that old unrenewed nature within us, and if that old Adam still reigns within thee, how

can Christ have spiritually risen in thy soul? Sin belongs to the oldness of the flesh, and if thou walkest in this, how can the new man live in thee?

Raise us up, O blessed Jesus, from the awful death of sin, that we may henceforth walk in newness of life with Thee. May Thy death, O Christ, put to death the old Adam in us, and may Thy resurrection call into new life our inward man! May Thy precious blood cleanse us from all our sins, and Thy resurrection clothe us as in a robe of righteousness! For Thee, O Thou True Life, do we who have been dead in sin most ardently yearn; to Thee, O Thou True and Only Righteousness, do we who have so foolishly wandered away from Thee through our sins, turn with longing hearts; to Thee, O Thou True Salvation, do we, condemned to eternal death for our sins, look with yearning hearts. O, quicken us by Thy Spirit! Justify us by Thy grace! And save us for Thy mercy's sake! Amen.

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